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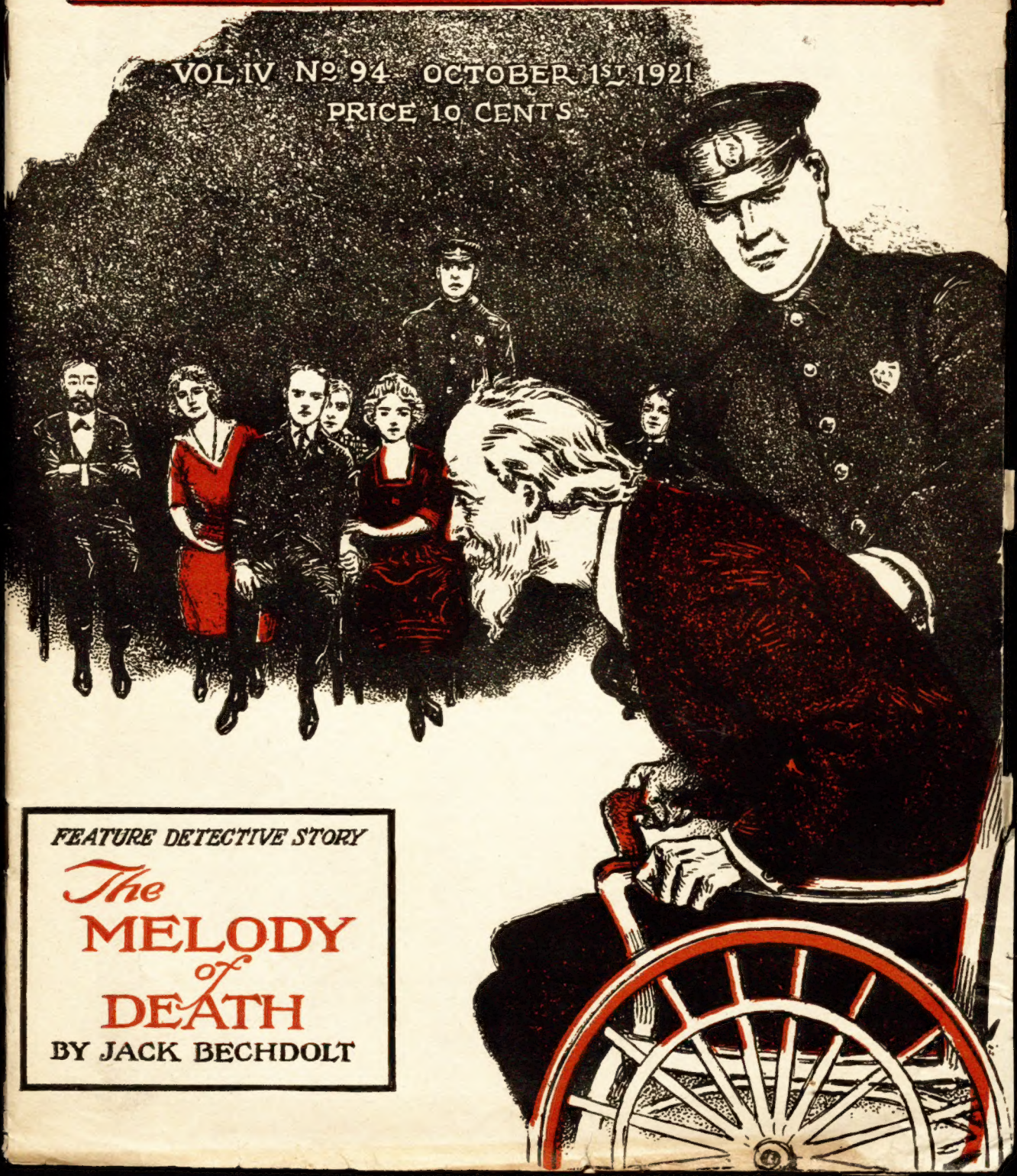
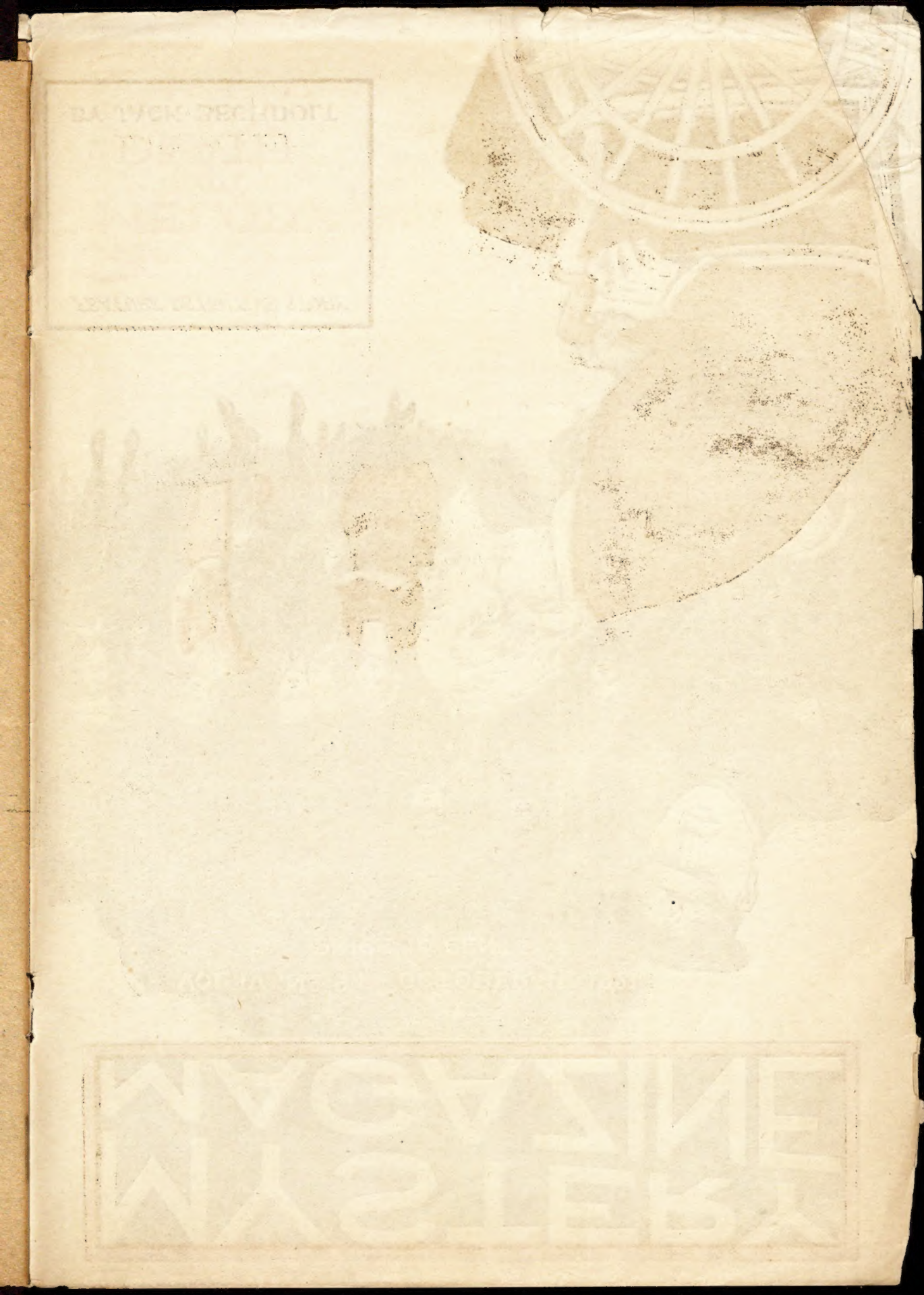


FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The MELODY *of* DEATH

BY JACK BECHDOLT



A Story by William Hamilton Osborne will be in our next number. Read it!

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE MELODY OF DEATH

By JACK BECHDOLT

CHAPTER ONE

SOMETHING AMISS.

AN unusual event had upset the staid routine of Number 810, the most aristocratic of a most exclusive and aristocratic row of old-fashioned houses of Chelsea section, New York.

The front door opened hurriedly and a woman ran down the steps. She was bareheaded.

Under the light from the street arc any of the neighbors might have identified Mrs. Clara Shay, the white-haired manager of a patrician household which had for years given them something to talk about.

Had any been there to observe Mrs. Shay's face, the stark terror that shone from her eyes would have brought an answering shudder.

Bareheaded, hurrying with absolute disregard for appearances, wringing her hands as she went, the woman sped as far as the street corner and looked wildly to right and left. These were strangely quiet streets at evening, and the chimes of the great theological school near by, which had ceased their hymns not a quarter of an hour since, tolled their curfew. Just now Mrs. Shay saw nobody.

For several moments she stood at the corner, undecided. Her lips moved, mumbling unintelligible words of alarm.

As suddenly as she had run out she turned back again toward Number 810.

"The telephone!" she was exclaiming as she stumbled along. "Why didn't I think of that!"

Mrs. Shay's was an older generation, one unused to modern convenience, acquiring that taste at a time of life when habits are formed. It was characteristic of her that at an alarm she should

think last of the quickest of all modes of communication.

But she did not have recourse to the telephone. In the doorway of her residence she collided with a young and soldierly appearing man in civilian's attire, who was about to press the electric bell button. With a gasp Mrs. Shay clutched his arm, glanced into his face and recognized a friend.

"Mr. John Weaver! Thank God it is you!"

John Weaver of the metropolitan detective force, answered with some surprise. "Glad I'm welcome, Mrs. Shay. I was calling for Frank Manton, but if I can be of help—— Why, is something wrong?"

"I want you to come in," she said unsteadily. "Please come with me, very quietly. To—to his apartment."

"His apartment? You mean—Warren Haddon?"

"Yes! Mr. Haddon, he—— Will you come in quickly, please?"

Weaver snatched a pass-key from Mrs. Shay and opened the street door. He drew her into the dusky hall with him and went at once up a flight of heavily carpeted stairs. Only the fact that he had taken the housekeeper by the arm prevented her being left far behind. His pace was quick and decidedly business-like.

He asked but one question as they went along, and that in a quiet, confidential murmur.

"What is it, Mrs. Shay?"

Mrs. Shay whispered back: "Warren Haddon has been murdered."

CHAPTER TWO

HIS WEDDING NIGHT

THE hurried entrance of Mrs. Shay and John Weaver of the metropolitan detectives attracted no attention from other residents of Number 810. The several people sheltered under that roof were going about their affairs quite unconscious of the tragedy hid from their ken by only timber and plaster partitions.

Though he was known to be rich in money and property, Warren Haddon had long been considered a queer character. The last direct descendant of an old-time Knickerbocker family, one entitled to a leadership in the most exclusive society, Haddon, on the death of his young wife some years back, foreswore society and all normal intercourse with the world.

The great town house on Fifth avenue had been leased to business for a term of ninety-nine years. His several country homes were sold. All his elaborate establishment was dispersed, and with only Mrs. Shay to link him to the past Warren Haddon retired to Number 810, one of numerous buildings he owned, there to take up his home.

And this residence, though it was handsome in its conservative, old-fashioned way and on a pleasant, quiet residence streets stood so far from upper Fifth avenue and from the several downtown parks where fashionable residences still cluster that Warren Haddon was dead to the world of fashionable society. He was dead and forgotten by the newer generations.

Haddon's eccentricity went farther than this.

In the residence he chose as his last he made the second floor suite his own. For the widower of quiet tastes, the embittered recluse, it was enough. When, later, a paralysis had stricken him and he was confined to alternation between bed and an invalid's wheel chair, the second floor gave him room to spare.

And the rest of the house Warren Haddon rented out.

His conduct was a matter of some scandal in that proud, quiet row where each resident prided himself he owned a home. Property there changed hands mostly by inheritance. Little was sold or leased. Never did bill of sale or lease contract permit the letting of rooms to lodgers.

But Warren Haddon, who was rich, master of his own affairs and absolutely indifferent to what the world thought, filled the vacant spaces of Number 810 with strangers, who paid for their accommodation.

There were a half dozen of these lodgers at Number 810. Several had been there almost as long as Haddon, the rest for many years. Quiet, routine business people, they appreciated the solid comfort and the reasonable rentals.

The junior of these lodgers, both in age and the years of his residence there, was Frank Manton, the same whom Detective John Weaver had called to see when Mrs. Shay interrupted with her tragic news. He occupied a large, comfortable room with bath on the first floor, and at the moment Mrs. Shay brought in the detective he was pacing this apartment in a frenzy of nervousness.

Frank Manton was partially attired in full evening dress. The remainder of this attire, as well as the clothes he had laid off, were scattered about the room. Several traveling bags were filled and strapped for transportation. Another yawned, waiting last-minute consignments.

Manton was about thirty years old and reported to be fairly successful in a brokerage business. He was tall, well-developed, with clean-shaven face and good features. His smile was charming.

Manton in his pacing turned often to glance at a traveling clock on his dresser. "He's late," he exclaimed often. "Half-past six! Almost twenty-five minutes of seven now, but he's got to come. Got to! John would never throw down a friend in a fix like I'm in. Never!"

Then Manton would attempt to complete his toilet, his nervous hands fumbling his dress ties until, one after another, the fresh, new cravats were discarded, crumpled and marred linen collars lay thick on the floor.

In spite of Manton's growl and his evident impatience, there was no malice in his expressed

opinion of Detective John Weaver. There was no anger in anything he was doing, but under all his impatience a suggestion of happiness that caused his face, even in the midst of his petulant outbreaks, to radiate into unexpected smiles and grins.

Anybody could see that Frank Manton was supremely happy this evening. And the cause of his happiness appeared to be the framed photograph of a young woman which his eyes consulted often as he paced. The photograph stood on his dresser, the picture of a slender, golden-haired girl. Even the photographic monotone suggested the charm of her delicate coloring and the beauty of her wide-set dark eyes that looked frankly at the beholder. Even teeth just showed between the smiling lips, and the suggestion of a dimple gave a charming and unusual emphasis to the smile.

This photograph had been inscribed in a flowing hand: "With all the love in the world, to Frank from Hazel."

The original of that picture in the silver frame to which Manton turned so often was Hazel Cameron, a young woman who had been Frank Manton's secretary until quite recently. Now, at Manton's persuasion, she was about to become his wife.

A knock at the door interrupted this scene. Manton threw it wide and recognized Detective John Weaver with a shout. "Come in. Come in, quick! Good Lord, how I do need you. We've got just half an hour to make the church. For the love of the angels, old man, get a tie and collar around my neck! Suffering Moses, I thought you were going to throw me down. My best man throw me down—at my wedding!"

John Weaver made no move to comply with Manton's demands. He released Manton's embracing hands from his arms and looked at him steadily and sadly, shaking his head.

Too excited as yet to catch the import of Weaver's conduct, Manton burst out again: "John! Do you want Hazel to wait at the altar? In heaven's name, man, speed up! Sa-a-a-y, you don't seem to realize that getting married to the greatest girl in the world is a serious business!"

Weaver put out his hand and caught his friend by the shoulder.

"Steady," he said warningly. "Steady, and listen. More serious business than that on hand now, Frank."

The bridegroom babbled. "Listen, you don't mean a—a case? John, you can't desert me tonight."

"No, Frank, I shan't desert you. Not that——" Weaver's lips twisted in a crooked smile over his meaning. "But, Frank, brace up and take this like a man; that wedding is called off."

Frank Manton only stared, his mouth open.

"The wedding must be postponed. At once. For a time at least. Frank, your uncle, Warren Haddon, has been murdered."

Frank Manton's broken exclamation expressed both shock and horror. He added hurriedly: "Dead! Poor old boy—dead! I am sorry—sorry. With all his faults—and he had enough to keep us quarreling most of the time—with all that, he was a gentleman, game to the core!"

Manton shuddered, and his hand went to his eyes a moment.

"John," he said soberly, "I saw and talked with Uncle Warren not an hour ago. We quarreled, worse than usual. I left that room hating him, and now, John, I wish I could take back some of the nasty things I said to him. Poor old boy, dead!"

Detective Weaver was about to speak, but Manton broke in again.

"But, John, the wedding, that's got to go on. Even after my uncle's death, at this hour I can't desert Hazel, disgrace her. Her claim comes first of all. My fiancée, my bride, John, she comes first."

"No," Weaver said firmly. "Not ever her claim comes first. There's another, a bigger claim than that on your time to-night, Frank."

"What the devil do you mean by that?"

"The law," said Detective John Weaver. "Even to-night that comes first. The law claims you, Frank."

"The law! Me?" Manton's face paled, then reddened. He burst out angrily: "Look here, is this some rotten bad joke you're springing?"

"It's not a joke. I wish to God it was. Frank—Frank Manton, until this mystery's cleared up you can neither go nor come except as the law directs. And now the law orders you to stay, even at the cost of putting off that marriage. You must stay here with me, my prisoner. Frank Manton, I put you under arrest."

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT THE OTHERS KNEW

THE occupants of Number 810 were gathered in the front room, second floor, the pleasant, windowed apartment where Warren Haddon spent his waking hours helpless in his wheel chair, the room where his dead body had been found.

Beside Mrs. Shay, two women servants and Frank Manton there were seated in a row of chairs three men and two women. All faced Detective John Weaver, who had placed a table in front of him, and with his assembled notes somewhat resembled a lecturer about to address his class.

At the table, besides Weaver, was a stenographer in police uniform, his notebook spread open and ready. Guarding the several doors of the house were other uniformed patrolmen. Pur-

ant to orders from headquarters Detective Weaver had taken charge of the case.

The windows of the room, which reached almost from ceiling to floor, looked across the wide street at the trees of the theological college campus, a charming view of greenery backed by solid Gothic towers, sketched dimly now against the night sky. Along the side wall was a tall, built-in bookcase well filled with volumes; in the opposite side wall an open fireplace and handsome mantel, and above that a striking oil portrait of one of the dead Haddons, built into the oak paneling of dull-gold finish which covered walls and ceiling. The rear wall was cut by a door leading to the rooms behind, and the remainder of its expanse bore a continuation of the tall bookcases. The floor was covered with Persian rugs of silky luster and rich tone. With its well-chosen furniture, it was a room of charm and personality. It had been remodeled to suit the whim of Warren Haddon, with every possible thought for his comfort, modern in every way from the shaded electric fixtures to the two bronzed registers set low in the front wall to supplement the fireplace in supplying an even, comfortable hot-air temperature.

In the centre of this room, replaced exactly where it had been found, so that it was between though not intercepting the view of Detective Weaver and his audience, was the invalid wheel chair in which Warren Haddon was found dead.

Detective Weaver addressed his listeners.

"As you all know, Mr. Haddon was killed by a bullet, the bullet of a .38 calibre pistol. His body was discovered by Mrs. Shay, who called it to my attention. My purpose is to ask each of you to account for his own movements between half-past five and half-past six this evening in order that the law can sift out any information that will clear up this mystery. Mrs. Shay, please tell us what you know."

The white-haired housekeeper rose. Her eyes were red with weeping. She clasped and unclasped her nervous hands as she spoke rapidly, in a tone so low that frequently the stenographer asked her to repeat.

"I have been in Mr. Haddon's employ thirty-one years, first in the town house on Fifth avenue and then here, after his wife died. After his stroke of paralysis Mr. Haddon was not able to move without help, even to get from his wheel chair to his bed. He had to be helped with his meals. He could speak, his brain was brilliant as ever—more brilliant, I sometimes think. But he was like a child physically. I always waited on him, and he would never hear of a trained nurse or any other attendant.

"I last saw Mr. Haddon alive about a quarter past four. He was in his chair—just as it stands now. I had been reading to him. Mr. Manton, his nephew, interrupted us, and Mr. Haddon told me he would call me when he needed me. I did not see him again until——"

"Pardon me," Weaver interrupted, "you left uncle and nephew together?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Haddon in his chair, just as it stands now?"

"Just as it stands."

"They were on good terms, talking amiably?"

"They were not talking, Mr. Weaver. Except to nod to each other, they said nothing while I was here. I gathered they wanted to talk over something in private from the way Mr. Haddon dismissed me."

"And that is all you know until the moment you found Mr. Haddon's body?"

"Yes, sir. When the chimes in the church across the street began to ring for six o'clock, I was reminded that Mr. Haddon would want to be moved into the other room where I always arranged his little table for his dinner. He was always particular to be moved at just six o'clock, and didn't like it if I was late. So I hurried to this room, and when I came in——" Mrs. Shay paused and shuddered.

"Haddon was dead—in the chair?"

"Yes, Mr. Weaver."

"The chair had not been moved? He had not altered his position since you left him?"

"The chair was the same. Mr. Haddon had not moved; how could he, a paralytic!"

"You were on good terms with Mr. Haddon, Mrs. Shay?"

"Me! Yes, sir. That is, I——" Mrs. Shay stopped and colored slightly. "Sometimes," she said with frankness, "Mr. Haddon was trying, and no denying that. He was an old man, Mr. Weaver. Sometimes he was no better than a naughty old child, and I had to treat him like a child. I've spoken harshly to him, yes, sir. We have quarreled, but—but——" She raised her head and there were tears in her eyes. "Mr. Haddon was a gentleman just the same," she declared. "And I liked him—at least I know I shall miss him very much. He—— Well, maybe it's only because I'm used to have him depending on me for everything, but I know I shall miss him."

"After you left Mr. Haddon and Mr. Manton together, did you return to this room, or come near it until six o'clock?"

"No, indeed. I went to my little desk to check up the household bills. At about a quarter of six, just as the chimes began to ring, I stepped into the hall and met Mr. White, who has the top floor rear suite, and we talked there almost until the chimes stopped ringing. I remember we spoke about one of the hymns they played, 'Rock of Ages,' and it reminded me about how I used to sing in a choir as a girl."

"Then, Mrs. Shay, how do you know that Frank Manton and his uncle quarreled very harshly during that last interview?"

"I—I heard that, sir, from another person."

"From whom, Mrs. Shay?"

"From Mr. White, sir. He stopped me to mention it when I came into the hall."

"Did you see Frank Manton at that time?"

"I—yes, sir, I—— When I went up toward Mr. Haddon's room—this room—I passed Mr. Manton on the stair. It was dusk, but I spoke to him, and he mumbled something. The bells were just finishing the last hymn, but I am sure of his voice. He passed me in a great hurry."

"Did Frank Manton seem excited—do anything unusual?"

"Well, sir, I thought so. First I heard him slam a door—his uncle's door I supposed because I had left him there. That was as I started up the stair. Then he came hurrying past me, muttering something, and would not stop to talk, as he usually does."

"And that is all?"

"That is all."

"I would like to question Mr. White," Detective Weaver announced.

A man past middle age, partially bald, distinguished by dreamy, poetic face and his few long, silvery locks of hair, gave his name to the police stenographer as Guy White; occupation, inventor of children's games and toys, and said he had lived in Number 810 seventeen years, just a year less than Warren Haddon.

Guy White had a delighted personality. His lean, thin figure and aristocratic bearing were impressive. His poet's face reflected a striking sorrow as he spoke of the death of Warren Haddon, whom, it seemed, he had seen but twice in all his stay in the house, but esteemed highly as a man of character and distinction.

"Mr. Haddon and I were scarcely intimates," said White. "About a year after I first moved to his house I did myself the honor of calling on him in this apartment. We did not meet again until about a month ago, when, hearing from Mrs. Shay that his health seemed failing, I called again. From his conversation, his keen intelligence and brilliant interest in affairs of the world, I formed the conclusion that Mr. Haddon was indeed one of our best type of——"

"Excuse me, Mr. White"—Detective Weaver's voice was dry—"but will you tell me just what you heard of a quarrel between Haddon and Frank Manton which caused you to speak of the matter to Mrs. Shay?"

Thus rebuked, White showed no pique. He explained in his gentle, punctilious way. "I was passing this door shortly before the chimes began. I heard Mr. Haddon's voice. It was angry, rather shrill, as it was when he became excited. He seemed to be denouncing somebody."

"Did you hear his words?"

"Only this much: Mr. Haddon said: 'Such a step by a member of my family is a disgrace and an outrage and I forbid it.' And then I heard another voice, Mr. Manton's, declare: 'Forbid all you please. I'm my own master. I never asked you for a cent or a crust of bread, and I never took one from you. I don't care what you do with your money. I love this girl, and I'm going to marry her.' Then Haddon answered him, but so angrily and rapidly I did not catch the import, and, indeed, sir, I would not be thought an eavesdropper. I hurried on at once. Then, encountering Mrs. Shay, my old friend, I mentioned the affair because I deplore so deeply any such unfortunate ill feeling between a young man like Mr. Manton and one to whom undoubtedly he owed all respect and deference. And that is all I know, sir, except that after Mrs. Shay started up the stair I too heard a door slam and supposed it the door to this room. Then presently Frank Manton hurried down the stair and passed me. He seemed greatly excited and slammed into his own apartment."

"Thank you for a very complete and careful statement," Detective Weaver commented. White bowed and reseated himself.

The detective next examined the two maids and the four other occupants of Number 810. Three of the tenants had been absent at the time of the murder and accounted for their movements. The fourth was a maiden lady past sixty-five, who had been brought from a bed of illness only by the urgency of the occasion. Obviously no suspicion attached to her nor ever would.

"Now, Mr. Manton," Detective Weaver announced.

Frank Manton rose to face his lifetime friend.

"I ask you to make a statement covering all you know of this tragedy," Detective Weaver said calmly. "At the same time I warn you whatever you say may be used against you. It is entirely a matter for your own conscience to decide, Frank Manton."

CHAPTER FOUR

A DETECTIVE CHALLENGED.

FRANK MANTON'S puzzlement vanished from his face in a spasm of irritation. His eyes flashed at the warning from his best friend. His head went up proudly.

"I've nothing to conceal from you—or the law. I'm not afraid to tell everything I know," he said.

"I quarreled with my uncle, Warren Haddon, several times in the last couple of years. The subject of that quarrel was his money."

A little stir of interest ran through the row of listeners at this frankness. It seemed to incriminate Frank Manton from the start.

"When I came here," Manton continued, "I had never met my Uncle Warren. My mother died in the middle West. She had been estranged from Warren Haddon many years. I did not even know this was his house. Later, when Mrs. Shay mentioned his name, I became curious, made inquiries and found my uncle under the very roof that sheltered me. We became acquainted.

"Mrs. Shay is quite right when she says Warren Haddon was a gentleman. He was, at heart,

an upright man, but a man who suffered much from the warring elements of his character. They say every man has a dual nature, half good and half evil, and so long as he lives those two forces struggle, each trying for supremacy. My uncle was cursed more than most men because in him these forces were each strong and active. The battle was always raging. Sometimes one, then the other reigned, and a naturally impatient disposition and sharp temper made him doubly unhappy.

"We quarreled on the subject of money. My uncle tried to settle on me a part of his property. He wanted me to use the money for my own advancement. I think he felt a regret, perhaps remorse, for his long neglect of my mother, and wished to make up for that. I refused to take a penny of his."

Detective Weaver interrupted: "Yet Warren Haddon's will leaves you almost every cent of his large fortune. You know that?"

"I know it," Manton answered. "The will was made a few months ago, and my uncle told me of it. I answered I could not prevent his disposing of his property as he wished. That was his own affair. And I was grateful, too. What man can be untouched by another's effort to make him happy!"

"Yet you quarreled to-day," Detective Weaver prompted.

"Yes!" Manton's look darkened. "We quarreled. Even now, with my uncle lying dead in this house, I—I find it hard to forgive what he said—hard to forgive!"

From the little audience came a sharp gasp of disapproval. Manton paid no attention.

"To-night I was to be married," he burst out. "The woman who honors me is the finest lady alive. I love her, and her claim on me comes before all others. My uncle disapproved of my plans. He said that—that——" Manton's voice became harsher. "He dared say that Hazel was not socially my equal. My equal! Good God, when she is a thousand times my better! Yet he—this perverse old man—when he learned to-day of my plans, dared suggest—yes, order, that I break my word to her. He forbade me to marry."

In tense, strained silence they waited while Manton struggled for better composure.

"The gist of Warren Haddon's remarks was that unless I gave up Hazel, and broke my word to her, he would change his will and leave me nothing. I told him he was welcome to change his will and go to the devil. And I walked from this room and slammed the door behind me."

Detective Weaver, alone quite calm, said: "Only one point to clear up, then. The chimes were ringing when you left this room?"

"Yes, they were playing. I remember distinctly. I think it was the hymn, 'Rock of Ages.'"

"There was no other person in the room or in this apartment?"

"I saw nobody."

"Any weapon in sight?"

"No weapon."

Detective Weaver rose from his chair and made a brief statement addressed to them all.

"Warren Haddon was killed in this room by the bullet from a .38 calibre pistol. He was killed during the last five minutes before six o'clock, at the time the chimes in that church tower were playing the hymn, 'Rock of Ages,' the last hymn before the stroke of the hour. Mrs. Shay discovered the body almost before the hour ceased to toll. Frank Manton left this room but a minute or two before the hour tolled. No other person was in this apartment or left it, that is definitely established by the testimony of Mrs. Shay and Mr. White and the maid, who was on the third floor. Those are the facts."

The detective drew a deep breath, and moving around the table placed his hand on Manton's shoulder.

"Frank Manton," he said, "I place you under arrest and charge you with the murder of your uncle, Warren Haddon. From your own statements and the corroborating testimony, I am convinced that you killed that old man while he sat there helpless in his chair, or caused him to be killed. Plainly, your motive was to prevent the changing of his will and keep for yourself the large fortune he had left you. Any court and jury in the land will bear me out. You are guilty—guilty of murder!"

This statement, made with dread solemnity, brought half the household to their feet in excitement. There followed gasps and exclamations of astonishment and protest.

Before Detective Weaver could calm this noise the protest was climaxed in a startling manner.

The door of the apartment had opened, and a young woman, wrapped in a long cloak, entered. She was just in time to hear Weaver's words, and now she answered them by springing to Manton's side and throwing her arms about him, protecting him from them all.

As she sprang she screamed: "That's a lie! A lie! A foul lie. How dare you lie, John Weaver; how dare you!"

Pallid, still clad for her bridal, her dress of white silk hastily covered in the enveloping wrap, all who had seen her or her picture recognized Hazel Cameron, Manton's fiancée. From the steps of the altar she had come at Manton's hasty message, telling her the marriage was postponed.

Detective Weaver turned white.

"Hazel!" he gasped.

"Weaver, not long ago you said you loved me. You asked me to marry you. When I said I loved Frank Manton, your best friend, you acted like a man. You told me Manton was your nearest chum—your pal. You told me you would rather it was Manton than any man living, if it could not be you. You promised to prove your love the rest of your life by your devotion to Manton and to our happiness.

"Weaver, is this your proof? Is this how you love me—and Frank Manton? Is this cowardly charge the proof? Or did you lie to me when you said you loved me? Did you lie?"

"I do love you!"

"I challenge that," Hazel Cameron cried. Her voice rang. "I challenge! If you are a man and not a beast, Weaver, if you did not lie when you said you loved me, prove it now. Prove it by clearing your best friend's name—and my own good name, for his name is mine in the sight of God and men. Prove him innocent. I challenge you!"

CHAPTER FIVE

SOMEBODY OR NOBODY?

DETECTIVE JOHN WEAVER of the metropolitan police turned wearily back to the doorway of Number 810.

A cab was disappearing up the street, taking with it Hazel Cameron.

She had seen two patrolmen lead away the man she was to marry that night.

Hazel Cameron did not faint nor make an outcry at that sight. As Frank Manton left between the two policemen she went to his side a moment, kissed him and whispered earnestly: "I love you. Nothing else matters if you love me. Remember that always, and trust God for the rest."

Then the taxi, called by Detective Weaver, was announced.

Weaver went impulsively to Hazel as Mrs. Shay escorted her toward the cab. Hazel drew back from him, loathing in her eyes.

Weaver waited in the doorway for Mrs. Shay.

"I shall spend the night here," he said dully. "Please see that the house is restored to normal as soon as possible."

"They're all in their own rooms now," Mrs. Shay answered. "I suggested they do that."

"Good. You need say nothing about my staying to any of them. Everything all right?"

"Except that telephone. If you need to phone, Mr. Weaver, goodness knows you'll have to run out to the corner, bother that it is. Just after you put in that taxi call I tried it, and it's out of order. In the morning I'll report it."

"Let me, Mrs. Shay. The company will send a repairman. He may need to go through the house. I don't want strangers roaming the place. I'll report the telephone and the man will bring a note from me. Admit no other."

"Gracious, I'm glad you are going to take the bother off my hands, Mr. Weaver! I've enough on my shoulders now. It's always something about that electricity to worry me. Nasty new-fangled idea! Yesterday it was Mr. Haddon's bell."

"Mr. Haddon's bell?"

"The electric call bell from his room to mine, so he could call if he needed me at night. That went out of order. And we had an electrician's man wandering in and out of rooms and hammering and taking up boards and making a muss before it got fixed again."

"The man had trouble locating the break?"

"Trouble! My sakes, that he did! And finally, after all his muss, it proved to be a little piece of wire had slipped off those battery things in the cellar. And now that dratted telephone!"

"I'll look after all that," Detective Weaver promised and bade Mrs. Shay good-night.

He went to Warren Haddon's apartment on the second floor and knocked softly at the door of the murder room. A uniformed patrolman opened it. Another officer was waiting here in the room.

The second man reported to Weaver: "We had three men search every inch of the house. Not a trace of a weapon of any sort, from cannon down to popgun. Nothing."

"All right," said Detective Weaver. "It's mighty queer, but—well, you can't beat facts." He added: "I'll stay here alone tonight. The rest of you report back to the station."

When the men were gone Detective Weaver surveyed the room of mystery slowly.

"No weapon," he murmured, "and Warren Haddon was killed by a pistol bullet. It needs a pistol to fire that bullet—and there is no pistol. Thrown away, hidden, perhaps, though the murderer had little time for that. But there was a pistol—and somebody fired it. Or, if somebody didn't fire it, nobody fired it. That's so, too! Suppose somebody didn't fire the shot? Suppose nobody murdered Warren Haddon! Let's consider that."

His eyes searching the room, deathly still now, Detective Weaver stood motionless on the center rug.

He had before him a puzzle that would need all his skill and craft. His own remark, somebody or nobody, suggested the contradictory nature of the riddle he faced.

And that riddle he must solve!

CHAPTER SIX

THE TELEPHONE MAN

DETECTIVE JOHN WEAVER did not forget his promise to Mrs. Shay. Next morning a languid, middle-aged person wearing glasses and sporting a dejected mustache presented himself at Number 810 to inspect the telephone service. He brought a card from Weaver, and Mrs. Shay gave him the freedom of the house.

Besides a public telephone in the lower hall, there were telephones in Warren Haddon's apartment, in Frank Manton's, an extension instrument in Mrs. Shay's room and two in the rooms of tenants on the third floor.

The company trouble hunter, who seemed to have nothing but time on his hands, moved dejectedly from one to another, appearing unexpectedly from dark corners, poking his head out of windows, even studying the wiring along the fence in the yard at the rear.

In the midst of the morning Mr. Guy White, who was writing at a desk near the window of his third floor rear apartment, was startled at discovering a man not two feet from his elbow, separated only by the pane of glass in his window. It was the telephone man coming up the iron fire-escape ladder.

"Mind if I come in this way?" he called through the glass. "Gota look't your phone."

Startled and a little testy at the interruption, White raised the sash and announced crisply: "My telephone is perfectly all right."

"Sure I know, Cap," grinned the repairman, forcing the sash higher as he spoke and crawling in. "I know it's O.K., but I gotta see 'em all while I'm here. That's comp'ny orders."

"Why, then, look and welcome." Mr. White now recovered his normal cordiality. "That's your duty, of course, my dear fellow."

The repairman nodded. He removed the ear-piece from the telephone hook, had Central ring back the number, listened and shook his head.

"Say," he demanded, "got a screwdriver—any kind? Left my tools way down in the basement and I want to make a little adjustment so's this'll ring sharper. Any kind of screwdriver."

Mr. White produced the tool from his desk.

The repairman took it and glanced over it sharply.

"That's a good tool, an A-1 tool," he pronounced critically.

"Yes. From my laboratory and shop. I invent children's playthings and toys."

"That so! Like these electric trains and walking dolls and such?"

"Things of that sort."

"Why, say! I got my kid a great toy last Christmas, a little wooden dog that you put in a kennel. Then you yell in to him, 'Come on out!' and the dog springs out like he was alive. Works by a spring inside the kennel, and back of that is one of these metal diaphragms just like in a telephone ear-piece. Your voice makes that metal disk vibrate and it pulls a trigger and sets loose the spring. Funny toy! Say, maybe you made that one?"

Mr. White smiled. "You compliment me too much. I didn't invent that, though I have seen it often. A charming toy."

"Sure! Well, general, your phone's all right now. Glad to fix it. I can see you're fond of kids and that's the kind of man I'll vote for every time. G'by."

Mr. White rose and bowed graciously. His gentle, poetic face, framed by the white hair, looked particularly benevolent. "I am fond of children," he said. "My delight is in making them happy. And you are very kind to express such a flattering opinion. Good-day to you, sir."

CHAPTER SEVEN.

THE MELODY OF DEATH.

ALL the occupants of Warren Haddon's house had reassembled in the second floor front room at the invitation of Detective John Weaver.

Frank Manton was there, accompanied by a patrolman from headquarters, and Hazel Cameron sat close beside him. They talked little, but their hands were clasped and they drew together for comfort.

The other occupants of Number 810 sat as they had the night before when Detective Weaver questioned them, making a small audience, all except Mr. Guy White. Mr. White arrived a moment later than the others and found all the usual chairs occupied.

"Just take Warren Haddon's chair," Detective Weaver suggested. "I'll detain you only a moment."

So it happened the white-haired inventor dropped into the invalid wheel chair where, twenty-four hours previous, the body of Warren Haddon was found.

Detective Weaver again stood behind the small table and addressed them.

"I have completed my investigation of the murder of Warren Haddon," he said. "Because you have all been closely concerned, I want you to witness what has been discovered.

"Last night this house was searched while all of you were in this room. Our object was to find the weapon which fired the shot that killed Warren Haddon.

"No weapon was found," the detective continued. "Nothing was found to incriminate any of you."

A general sigh of relief.

Detective Weaver went on: "I was puzzled, no denying it. Mr. Haddon was killed by a pistol shot. That means there was a weapon to fire that shot. And we could not find the weapon. It is plain enough somebody fired that pistol, or if somebody did not, nobody fired the shot. I became convinced that nobody fired the shot."

This statement brought a gasp. Eyebrows went up.

"Nobody fired the shot that killed Warren Haddon. I have proved it. But"—here Detective Weaver's look was stern—"that does not mean nobody murdered Warren Haddon. His murderer is known. I will show him to you presently.

"I call your attention to Mr. Haddon's chair. It stands exactly where it did when his body was found, where it has always stood at this time of afternoon for months and even years, for Mr. Haddon was particularly methodical, a creature

of habit, childishly insistent that the schedule of his life should run uninterrupted. Notice that chair faces the window, and just under that window, directly in line with it, is the bronze grille of the hot-air register."

"Last night," said Weaver, "I examined this room minutely. The heads of two of the screws which set that bronze grille in the wall showed small, bright scratches. The screws had recently been removed to lift out the grille and the sharp-pointed screw-driver that did the work slipped and scarred the bronze. With the most particular care not to disturb these scratches, I removed the grille again and I found hidden behind it this device."

From the drawer of the table the detective brought out a small, compact machine and set it on the table before him. The instrument consisted of a rigid metal frame that held a .38 caliber pistol. Behind the pistol the principal object of interest was a length of piano wire stretched tightly between two points and left free to vibrate just as it would vibrate if stretched across the harp frame of a piano.

"In this weapon," said the detective, "I found one exploded .38 caliber shell. It's pistol barrel was placed to point through an opening of the bronze grille and directly at the breast of the helpless paralytic who faced it in that chair. That bullet killed Warren Haddon. It was fired by no human hand.

"The thing that fired this pistol," Detective Weaver went on, when he had paused long enough to let them recover from natural astonishment at his declarations, "was a note of music, a deep note, close to lower C. I have proved that by test. This piano wire, so cleverly arranged here, vibrates to that note, and when this wire vibrates its energy releases the trigger spring of this weapon of murder. As to the source of that music, I——"

Detective Weaver stopped short. All in the room caught their breaths. Another voice took up his explanation, the brazen voice of bells, breaking into solemn melody.

In the church tower across the street the chimes began their evening hymns.

"Exactly," Detective Weaver nodded, answering the bells. "That is what released the bullet from this pistol.

"Last night Warren Haddon sat in this room, paralytic, unable to move, facing the barrel of this weapon. And over there the chimes were ringing their sacred music, hymns telling divine love and mercy; God-given hymns perverted by the cowardly hand of a murderer to do the deed he feared to do.

"I said that two of the screw heads in the bronze grille were scratched by the tool that moved them. To-day, going through this house disguised as a telephone repair man, I discovered which of several screw-drivers here was used. The bronze screw heads have been treated to a coat of varnish. The tool I found bears traces on its sharp point of this varnish, as well as tiny shavings of bronze. That alone would prove my case. But there is another proof. I think that proof is almost here——"

Detective John Weaver paused a moment, listening. The room was deadly still. The final bars of a solemn hymn echoed and died. There followed the pause that all near the chimes knew, the hush before the hour struck. In a few seconds, that dragged now like hours, the deep, tolling bell which measured only time would lift its voice.

Anticipating that brazen tongue came a scream, shrill and terrible. Guy White, the old inventor, had sprung from his seat. He had found himself directly in front of the pointing barrel of the strange weapon Detective Weaver had been moving as he spoke.

In almost the same instant, at Weaver's nod, two policemen held White fast and forced him back to his seat.

And as they did so the deep bell tolled.

With its first toll, from the machine that dealt death, came a sharp, clear clack, the fall of the pistol hammer on an empty shell.

Guy White dropped, limp, back into the chair. He whispered: "I confess. I confess it all. I killed Warren Haddon."

"Exactly," Detective Weaver agreed sharply. "Your panic is the proof I lacked. You have convicted yourself beyond all need of confession. Trapped by your own act, White, because, beside me, but one person in this room knew which bell released this machine of murder. That person is the man who made it!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

SECRET SPRINGS THAT MOVE MEN

WHEN order had been restored in the room, when Guy White had recovered some composure, Detective Weaver bade him dictate a confession, and the stenographer took it down.

"I was born and lived until seventeen years ago as Guy Weiss," said the inventor. "I learned the machinist's trade, and, being ambitious, used my spare time to study out inventions that would bring me a fortune. I had moderate success and married happily.

"About twenty-five years ago I completed a device which occupied almost ten years of my life. To take the necessary time for the work I spent all my savings. All my future depended on that. That invention was stolen from me by Warren Haddon.

"Haddon was the financier to whom I took my invention, not yet properly protected. Haddon at once saw in it the possibilities of tremendous

earnings. Before I fully understood his purpose that discovery of mine was protected by patents taken in another's name, patents owned by the corporation Warren Haddon organized to exploit it.

"Warren Haddon refused to see me. The lawsuit I started to regain my rights went against me because I lacked the funds properly to protect myself. I was a poor man, wretchedly poor, broken in health. And my dear wife died in poverty, her heart broken. Then I swore I would make Warren Haddon pay.

"When I heard of Haddon's retirement from social life I traced him here and took lodgings under his roof. I was not afraid he would recognize me, I had changed so. But at the first opportunity I presented myself to him and told him who I was, and I gave Haddon the alternative of repaying me or dying. He agreed to pay me a handsome sum each month the remainder of my life, and his lawyers have paid it regularly until two months ago.

"I went to Haddon recently, as I testified before. He laughed his sneering, bitter laugh, and said he was tired of paying his good money in blackmail to a broken pauper. Then I determined Haddon would pay with his life.

"I made the machine Detective Weaver found. Yesterday I disconnected the wiring of Haddon's electric call bell in order to get the excuse to enter his rooms in the guise of an electrician and install my device.

"I killed Warren Haddon and I will gladly pay the penalty. I am glad for what I did. He deserved death."

When White's confession was signed and the white-haired prisoner removed by the police, Detective John Weaver went to Frank Manton and spoke to him and Hazel Cameron so that all could hear.

"Frank, you have been my best friend many years. I have never had cause to doubt you for one moment. Yet I accused you of this murder. I must explain now that my accusations were made not because of my personal belief, but because of my duty to the law, which has first claim on all I do. It was plain to me that the murderer of Warren Haddon was in this house. I knew I must make it plain to that guilty man that no suspicion of any sort attached to him, lest he take alarm and cheat the law. The surface proof pointed to you, Frank, and while every word I uttered wrung my heart, my duty was to accuse you."

Weaver paused, then extended his hand unsteadily.

"Frank," he said softly, "I ask you to believe me—and forgive me."

Frank Manton seized the outstretched hand and his other hand clapped Detective Weaver on the shoulder. "As if I didn't understand and forgive," he exclaimed.

"And Hazel?"

Detective Weaver's eyes rested on the girl.

She rose to answer him. She spoke haltingly.

"It's hard to answer you. I did not think I could ever forgive, John Weaver. But—but for Frank's sake, and because I honor your devotion to your duty, John—John, I do forgive you!"

Detective Weaver suddenly turned his back on them all. He walked toward the window and there was silence in the room as he stood there struggling for composure.

He faced them again with a quick gesture, his eyes shining.

"Those chimes!" he exclaimed. "What stories the bells tell! Last night their solemn toll was a melody of death. To-night, as they rang, I think I heard them sing of life, and love, and the marriage of two I love best in all the world."

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

THE next number of "Mystery Magazine," No. 95, out October 15, will be double its present thickness. It will have a new cover of poster design, the type will be larger, and it will contain only stories by the most brilliant writers in the world. It's inside title-pages will be handsomely illustrated. There will be sixty-four pages of gripping reading matter. No amount of money and brains have been spared to make it the very best magazine on the market.

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Subconscious Crime

By WILLIAM H. KOFOED

CHAPTER ONE

WHISTLING softly to himself, little, Weazened Simeon Dreer arose from his chair by the grate, where blue and yellow gas flames licked at imitation logs. Tossing a rather mauled back number of *The Evening News* face up on the library table, he picked his way through the uniquely cluttered study to a phonograph in the corner. With considerable deliberation he selected a record, started it, and returned to his chair. Music was his chief stimulant. By its aid he keyed his mental faculties to maximum effort. By its aid he had, in the past, solved some of the most baffling mysteries of the metropolis. Recourse to the apparatus in moments such as these meant only one thing: his remarkably agile mind had come again to one of those seemingly insurmountable barriers.

From the library table the newspaper scareheads glared out at him as if demanding further recognition:

DARING DIAMOND ROBBERIES CONTINUE

Fifth Coup in Three Months Brings Total of Losses to $100,000. Police Baffled. Shake-Up in Department Foreseen.

Dreer had been given that case the day before. Although until now he had operated exclusively on the murder squad, the commissioner in utter desperation at the strange and unprecedentedly successful series of robberies which had swept the city turned to him as a final hope. And now it was up to him. Unless something were done, and done quickly, the department would go down in disgrace as having met its master.

The record, coming to an end, scratched protestingly. Simeon shut it off. Hands in pockets, he wandered to a window and gazed down ten stories through the darkness to the street below. It was snowing and blowing heavily—a thoroughly miserable night. He was glad it wasn't necessary for him to be out in it.

The telephone buzzer roused him from his brown study. He lifted the receiver. "Dreer," he said.

"Mr. Dreer, this is headquarters. Lieutenant Babcock speaking. The commissioner left orders that you were to be informed of any new development in the big case. Here's the latest: only a moment ago a Fifty-second street jeweler called up. This merchant, Stanley A. Brainerd, suspects a man living in the neighborhood of being the stone-getter we're after. He wants some one to come out and lend an ear to his suspicions. He's afraid he's spotted and will be the next victim."

"I'll go immediately," said Dreer, adding somewhat sarcastically: "It's a charming night. I had been hoping for some excuse to take me out."

The lieutenant chuckled. "Oh, well," he said.

"I'll want company," continued Simeon. "We may go into action."

"It will be a welcome diversion. How many do you want?"

"Two will do. If young Bill Riddell's there send him and any one else you've got. And give them a John Doe warrant. I'll met them at this chap Brainerd's."

"Fine. My best wishes go with you," replied the lieutenant, who was a likable chap. The importance of every step in the business at hand was not lost upon him.

Dreer hung up, and a moment later got into an ulster that swallowed him, slapped a battered felt hat on his head and hurried from the room.

It could hardly have been an uglier night. As he stepped from the doorway of his apartment house the screaming wind caught him up and swept him along in its maw. The snow, like tiny particles of glass, cut his neck and caused him to hunch his shoulders so extremely that he appeared quite deformed. As for the temperature, he of the overheated study felt surely it must be forty below.

Occasionally shadowy forms appeared and disappeared in the blinding whiteness. Street traffic, however, was at a standstill. In spots the swirling snow had drifted to a height of three feet and more. Fortunately for Dreer the subway entrance was but a block distant. He reached it, fought his way out of the compelling current of air, and tumbled down the steps.

"Whew!" he said expressively, as he paid his fare and passed through the turnstile.

Ten minutes later he stepped again into the open. Fifty-second street, he found, being a busy thoroughfare, was not so difficult to navigate. He made good time to the shop of Stanley A. Brainerd, and entered briskly, shaking the white covering from his coat.

"From headquarters," he said briefly to the lean, bald-headed man behind the counter.

The man stopped polishing a tray full of rings and looked up. What he saw was certainly not an impressive figure, but a bedraggled little person in a slouch hat. He studied him deliberately. "Badge?" he asked at length.

Annoyed, Simeon snapped back his coat lapel.

"I didn't mean to be rude," the bald-headed fellow apologized, noting that Simeon was beginning to bristle. "But one can't be too careful these days, can one? Any stranger may be the stone-getter. I am Mr. Brainerd—Stanley A. Brainerd. I telephoned headquarters half an hour ago, and this is why: I've a business neighbor, an elderly man named Leon Wattles, who has dealt in carpet and rugs on Fifty-second street for years. Some time ago Mr. Wattles' wife died, and having no children and half a dozen empty rooms in the house, and his business not being one which by any stretch of the imagination could be looked upon to make him rich, he threw open the place to roomers. Well, Mr. Wattles came to me several weeks ago, just after the perpetration of the fourth big diamond robbery, and in considerable agitation told me that his suspicions had been aroused over one of his roomers, a queer old Southern mountaineer. It appears this fellow, Gabe Hatfield, had come North with a new religion around which he hoped to form a church—a weird sort of creed dealing crudely with the mysteries of the subconscious. Though slovenly in his dress, he was fairly well supplied with money, which he claimed was contributed by his religious adherents to advance the cause. At first I was inclined to scoff at the possibility of this mountaineer being the clever diamond thief who has stirred the trade to such a frenzy of fear, and I believe I actually succeeded in convincing Mr. Wattles of the incredibility of such an idea. At least, he went away saying he would not be in a hurry; he would await developments, as he had no desire to incriminate an innocent man. But to-night, in the midst of the storm, I observed this wild-eyed Hatfield with his face glued to my window, drinking in the sparkle of my diamond display. The look on his face gave me a distinct shock. It was that of a fanatic stirred to great emotional depths. I'll admit I fell back and reached for my revolver, which I keep under the counter near the cash register. My first alarming thought was that he would smash the window and make off with the choicest stones; but I realized almost immediately that if he were the diamond thief he would not stoop to such methods. Nor did he. He tore his eyes away at length and departed. I felt, however, as witness and actor in this silent little drama, that this was the man! So I called you up."

"I'm glad you did. Will you take me to the fellow's lodgings?"

"Certainly, if you wish. May I ask what course you intend pursuing?"

"I'll arrest him, of course."

"But he may be innocent."

"True enough. And in the statutes at least—if that is any consolation—he is regarded as innocent until proven otherwise."

Before the bald-headed Mr. Brainerd could reply the door opened and a bluecoat entered. Strictly speaking, of course, he could not be termed a bluecoat, as he was powdered from head to foot with countless hard little snow particles that glistened like diamonds under the bright lights. He looked more like a snowman. Even his face was masked in white. But his helmet identified him. Or was it a helmet? It looked more like a derby.

Simeon laughed at the spectacle. "Surely you're not Bill Riddell?" he asked.

The newcomer reached under his coat-tails as though for a handkerchief, but brought out instead an ominous blue-barreled automatic! "Put 'em up," he answered gruffly, emphasizing his request with a slight though wicked shake of the weapon.

"Come, Bill, this is no time for joking," admonished Dreer.

"Up!" snarled the other, and Dreer suddenly realized that this wasn't Bill Riddell, and that he was confronting a serious situation. There was no time for further parley. The newcomer was cold as the snow that shrouded him—cold and stern and bent on having his way. Plainly he would stop at nothing—not even murder. Chagrined though he was, Simeon appreciated this, and allowed discretion to become the better part of valor. Reluctantly he followed the white-faced Brainerd's example by elevating his hands.

Quick as a cat, and as stealthily, the hold-up man locked the door, drew down a curtain, and flashed out the window lights without turning his back. And now with his free left hand he brought forth a pair of steel cuffs. Simeon's wrists were locked together, and his feet, too, but the thing was done so cleverly that at no time could either the detective or jeweler—raging mentally though they were—avoid that menacing muzzle. Then Brainerd was similarly trussed up, and both men fitted with gags, which obviously had been prepared for the purpose and were easily and quickly adjusted.

The stone-getter stood for a moment looking at their forms on the floor, and Simeon saw that he wore a white false face. He thought he detected, too, a faint chuckle behind the mask, and it puzzled him. At length, as though recollecting the precariousness of his situation, the fellow turned away and hurried to the front of the shop, followed only by Dreer's glaring eyes, which observed his unerring accuracy in removing from the window a tray of choicest gems.

Then the door slammed, and a profound silence descended upon the house of Brainerd.

CHAPTER TWO

FIFTEEN minutes passed. To the men on the tiled floor it might have been as many hours. With uncanny foresight, the stone-getter had hooked them to a leg of the showcase to prevent them from rolling over and kicking on the door.

The only means left of attracting attention was by thumping the floor. This they did lustily, but without result.

Then some one tried the door. The captives thumped louder than ever. Evidently they were heard, for with a single blow the glass was shivered, and a hand reached in and turned the key in its lock. Bill Riddell and a companion officer, clubs and revolvers ready, stood on the threshold, burly phantoms from the white outdoors.

Big Bill succeeded, with a bunch of duplicate keys he always carried, in opening the handcuffs and liberating his chief and the bald-headed jeweler, who was now in a beautiful state of "nerves."

Simeon, on the other hand, was white with rage. Pacing up and down the floor, gritting his teeth and striving to regain self-mastery, he found himself unable for the time to utter a word. He had been made a spectacle of by that cursed highwayman in the white mask.

But the mood did not last. Dreer's life being largely mental had developed his powers of inhibition, and shortly he had himself under control, shortly he found himself taking up each fact and weighing it with mathematical accuracy.

Simeon broke the silence. "Young Riddell," he snapped, "I've been attacked, held up, played with, and made to despise myself and my so-called powers by the stone-getter! Yes, the very fellow we're after. Imagine it, if you can!"

"No!"

"I didn't think you could," proceeded the diminutive detective dryly. He was himself once again, and rapidly, in his inimitable way, proceeded to give Big Bill the details.

While this was taking place, Stanley Brainerd, with trembling movements, inventoried his window stock and found his loss to be in the neighborhood of $15,000. He conveyed the news to Dreer, then returned to the window to remove its contents and lock them up in the huge safe behind the counter. When he finished, he too was calmer, and turned to the detective with a suggestion. "These wet footprints," he said, indicating wavering outlines on the tiled floor. "Might they not aid you? Or perhaps in the snow—outside——"

"In this case utterly useless," Simeon replied. "The man wore buckle arctics over his shoes. As for the marks outside, fifteen minutes of wind and snow would be sufficient to disguise the trail. But it doesn't matter, really. If you will take us over to your neighbor's we'll look up this fellow Gabe Hatfield."

Brainerd brought some planks from the cellar, and they boarded up the door and departed.

The storm had not abated a whit. If anything, it was more violent than before, and Dreer had considerable difficulty keeping his feet. Fortunately, however, the distance was less than a block. Most of the shops had closed, and with their lights extinguished the street was quite dark, for the effectiveness of the arc lamps was lost high above in the great swirl of white.

The Wattles carpet store was the dreariest and least progressive-looking place of the lot. It was a three-storied building of dull-red brick, and escaped oblivion merely by reason of an antiquated tin awning, the only one of its kind in sight. Behind the expanse of dirty plate glass shadowy rolls of carpet flanked either side of an outspread rug.

The four men approached, Brainerd in the lead. There was a store entrance and a private entrance. As things were shut up, the jeweler ignored the former and thumbed a push button at the bottom of a flight of stairs, made visible through the glass door by the rays of a dim hall light.

After an interval a form descended the stairs and the door was opened. A man of middle life with a straggling mustache and mild eyes stood before them. "Good-evening, Mr. Brainerd," he began. "What——"

"S-sh! Not so loud, Wattles," warned the tall jeweler, with a finger to his lips. "The police are here. They want your lodger, Gabe Hatfield."

"Why——"

"It was my store to-night. He got away with fifteen thousand——"

"Great Scott, Mr. Brainerd!"

"It's a fact. And something's got to be done. Is he in?"

"Why, I believe so. I—I hadn't paid much attention. He's so quiet."

Dreer thrust himself forward, mechanically displaying his badge. "Dislike to disturb you, Mr. Wattles," he apologized perfunctorily, "but this is serious business. We're dealing with one of the cleverest crooks of a decade. Your lodger may be innocent. It is not for me to say. Suspicion points at him and I shall have to take him along. Will you show us to his room?"

"Certainly, sir. I—I must confess I rather suspected him myself. He's such a queer chap. Chatters a lot about the unreality of space and claims the ability to project his astral self from place to place while he remains within his room. Of course it's all bosh, but——"

The little group looked at one another. Yes, of course it was all bosh, and yet, assembled there in the shadowy hallway, just out of reach of the deserted, wind-swept street, it didn't sound quite so foolish as it might at mid-day.

"May I request," Wattles was saying, "that you endeavor to avoid a disturbance? I have other roomers, you know."

"We shall do our best," assured Dreer. "Come, young Riddell."

Quietly they filed up the stairs.

On the third floor landing Wattles paused and indicated a room at the rear. "There," he whispered, and stood aside to allow the line to file past. A light shone from under the door upon the

worn hall matting. Simeon knelt and applied his eye to the keyhole.

He saw a man seated in a rocker under a dangling, unshaded electric lamp. Though only his back was visible, Dreer perceived that he was hunched over something in his lap.

The detective's heart-beat speeded up. Perhaps the stolen diamonds were within reach. With his hand on the doorknob, he motioned for Wattles to approach. Then he tried the door. To his complete surprise, it was unlocked. The little group walked in.

The man arose, closed the book he held in his hands, and laid it on a battered bureau at his elbow. Though frankly surprised at the intrusion, he displayed neither confusion nor fear.

Dreer studied him. He was a raw-boned old fellow, with a hearty, weather-scarred face and a picturesque iron-gray stubble which answered very well for a beard. He wore no collar, and his corduroy trousers sagged at the knees. A typical Southern mountaineer.

"Are you Gabe Hatfield?" Simeon asked.

"I air. What kin I do fer you-all?"

"The best thing you can do is come quietly with us. You're under arrest."

"Me? What fer?"

"You're suspected of a series of diamond robberies, the last of which occurred within this very block—to-night."

"Naw! Why, I ben settin' hyeh all evenin'."

"Anybody with you? Anybody to prove that you've been sitting here all evening?"

With a slow shake of his head, Hatfield admitted there wasn't.

"I think you'd better get your coat and hat on," said Simeon. He turned to the second officer, and in a low tone requested him to send for the wagon. The bluecoat departed.

"This hyeh is a funny how-de-do," Hatfield was saying. "I hain't had nothin' ter do with no diamonds, much ez I'd like ter. But ef you-all lock me up, so help me Gawd I'll show ye what I kin do. Thar ain't no bars made in this hyeh world strong 'nough ter hold me."

CHAPTER THREE

SEVERAL days later Simeon Dreer arose at his customary time, and, in his customary manner, bathed, dressed, and descended to a nearby restaurant where he customarily breakfasted. On the way he procured a morning paper, which quite naturally reminded him of how grateful he was that his plight at the Brainerd store had been withheld from the press. Had it become known, further ridicule and abuse would have been heaped upon the already long-suffering department. But the robberies themselves were almost as bad in this respect. And the fact that they were recurring now with greater frequency was calling the attention of the newspapers of other cities to them. Soon they would become a national—perhaps an international—episode.

While awaiting the fruit, Simeon spread out his newspaper, and the following hit him squarely between the eyes:

THIEF RAIDS JEWELRY STORE; LOSS $20,000

Diamond Robberies Pile One Upon the Other—Second This Week—Same Hand Seen

Dreer's eyes were wide with astonishment. Why the devil hadn't he been summoned during the night if this sort of thing were going on? Then he recalled dimly the phone had been ringing. But he had been so tired. The strain of the last few days had played him out. Yes, he remembered. He had thought the annoying clatter a dream.

Well, it looked very much as if the awkward, innocent-appearing backwoodsman from Tain'see had put the thing over! Or had he? Certainly his boast had been made good for him.

The waiter had come and placed a baked apple on the table. Without noticing waiter or apple, Simeon Dreer arose, dropped the newspaper carelessly on his chair, and with his nose buried in the now upturned collar of his ulster, and with his keen little eyes searching in great concentration through space, hurried from the restaurant. The girl behind the cashier's desk smiled. The waiter grinned in return. He wasn't angry. He knew a generous tip would compensate him for his annoyance when Simeon returned.

Dreer visited the scene of the seventh great diamond raid and spent an hour there without discovering even the slightest clue on which to work. Truly, it might have been the work of a ghost—the job was so clean. Not a thing disturbed. It was as though the culprit had stalked through solid walls and doors to realize his intentions. The weazened little investigator twisted his lips in a wry, cynical smile. Such rot! But it wasn't a laughing matter. He appreciated that only too well. For he felt the pressure of the whole city administration upon him. They looked to him as a saviour—a saviour from the stigma of inefficiency. And he wasn't getting anywhere.

And yet, fully cognizant of the situation though he was, instead of sticking to the trail, however indistinct, he went home to his littered apartment and spent the day reading and playing the phonograph!

In this, however, he was not as unwise as would appear. He realized the futility of aimless action; and, besides, was frank enough to admit—to himself—that the whole thing had him "up in the air." It was one of those rare cases the neucleus of which did not readily reveal itself, even in theory. Simeon felt the need to stop and take thought. For him, every case was, in its first stages, a mental problem. For him it was abso-

lutely essential, before going into action, to formulate positive opinions deduced from the evidence at hand as to the culprit's identity and possible motives; and then by the means employed in perpetrating his misdeeds trace back from the crime to its origin, and with irrefutable facts accumulated on the way force the fellow to confession.

Now, more than ever, Simeon felt the lack of very decided opinions as to the culprit's identity. Eliminating all thought of the supernatural, the imprisoned suspect, Gabe Hatfield, might really be as innocent as a new-born babe. There was an annoying lack of facts here, and even now Dreer was awaiting a wire from the sheriff of Sequatchie County, Tennessee, to ascertain Hatfield's status there.

Pondering the events of that stormy night at the Brainerd jewelry store on Fifty-second street, Simeon outlined in their proper sequence the participating characters from the time of the telephone call from headquarters, as follows: Lieutenant Babcock, Stanley A. Brainerd, the man in the white mask, Policeman Bill Riddell, Policeman Peterson, Leon Wattles, and Gabe Hatfield.

Was Hatfield the man in the white mask? Certainly with the scanty evidence at hand no jury would convict him of that crime.

While they were awaiting the patrol up there in the Southerner's bare little room Dreer had searched with the utmost thoroughness for evidence, and found none—absolutely none. The book he had been painfully studying was on psychic phenomenon. There was nothing hidden between its leaves. There were no diamonds or other jewelry anywhere about. As in the case of the robberies themselves, there wasn't a scrap of evidence on which to work.

It was well on toward nine o'clock that evening when Simeon, who had been slouched in his Morris chair puffing at a richly colored meerschaum, was aroused by a tapping at his door.

A messenger boy stood in the hall. Dreer accepted the yellow telegraphic envelope and flipped him a quarter. He was glad he had given the address of his apartment on his official communique to the constable of Sequatchie County, Tennessee. Now here undoubtedly were some facts about Gabe Hatfield over which he might dream. He tore open the envelope and read:

"SIMEON DREER, ESQ.:

"Hatfield quite a character in these parts. Self-educated occultist bent on founding church. His theories strange mixture of pagan religions, psychic beliefs, and modern scientific practice. Seems sincere, and has small but devoted following among the mountaineers, who subscribed enough money to send him North, where he hoped to interest wealthy people in his ideas. Has spirited daughter, Arline, whom I have informed of his arrest. She is leaving immediately to join him THOMAS D. LEDERER.

"Sheriff Sequatchie County, Tenn."

The message was dated noon of the day before. Obviously it had been delayed a bit in transmission. Dreer read it again, and whistled softly. "This is interesting," he commented. "Looks as if I am going to get myself embroiled with ghosts and goblins after all."

Promising himself that in the morning he would visit Hatfield in his cell and cross-examine him, Simeon retired to his bedroom, and had shortly exchanged his severely dark trousers and smoking jacket for a suit of flannel pajamas. He then laid his meerschaum on a convenient ash tray, threw up the single window, which opened on a fire-escape and revealed through iron latticework countless winking lights of the city below, and scuttling away from the draught which immediately attacked his bare feet slipped between the covers, to woo a fitful and capricious Morpheus with only a fair degree of success.

Unquestionably the most mysterious of the normal mental states is that bordering upon the unconscious, that which vacillates so fantastically between the sleeping and waking. Simeon Dreer had full occasion to appreciate this on the evening in question, for sound sleep did its best to elude him. His active imagination refused to be subdued and carried him through some weird and hair-raising experiences in thought-land before he was brought suddenly upright by a sound at the open window.

What he saw paralyzed him for the moment.

Moon rays, intensified by snow-capped roofs and acting as a veritable spot-light, disclosed a great black bulk slipping over the sill from the fire-escape. A revolver barrel glinted menacingly.

As his feet touched the floor the intruder turned for a swift look down the iron stairs, as though reassuring himself of his means of escape. In that move Greer glimpsed his face, or rather his disguise, for, as before, he wore a white mask—a false-face, much like a clown's, with the colored rings painted out.

Loath to credit the evidence of his senses, Simeon pinched himself sharply. The ensuing pain was so genuine that he waxed violently angry at the intrusion which had occasioned it, and bellowing in a voice altogether out of proportion to his size he leaped from bed and dove headlong at the stone-getter.

Unfortunately, in his haste he had neglected to free himself from the bed-clothes. These tripped him, and instead of landing on his antagonist he landed on his stomach. The jar dazed him for an instant; then he rolled quickly into shadow, for he fully expected a fusillade of shots.

To his surprise not a sound broke the stillness.

Creeping from behind a tabouret, Simeon peered toward the open window. The bright moonlight streamed over the floor, but revealed—nothing.

The little bare-footed, pajama-clad detective, shivering in the cold air, arose and snapped on the lights. The room was quite empty. Sheep-

ishly, he went to the window and swept the entire length of the fire-escape with a searching gaze. Nothing. Nothing at all. He prowled about the bedroom and living room with the same result. Then, castigating himself as a fool and a rider of nightmares, he returned to the warmth of his quilts and blankets and endeavored to dismiss the incident from his mind.

But he couldn't. Gabe Hatfield's promise kept recurring to him. "Ef you-all lock me up, so help me Gawd, I'll show ye what I kin do," he had said. "Thar ain't no bars made in this hyeh world strong 'nough ter hold me."

CHAPTER FOUR

SIMEON'S principal possessions next day were a headache, a grouch, and the red mark where he had pinched himself. The disquieting thought—disquieting to a stanch materialist like Dreer—that Gabe Hatfield's ethereal person had stepped out of its shell and paid him a visit kept recurring and adding fuel to his slow burning anger. "Rot!" he growled again and again. "Rot!"

There appeared to be only one thing left to do, and that was to pretend for the time being—bitter pill though it be—that he believed in all this "rot," and reason from that standpoint. Otherwise the prisoner's viewpoint must remain a blank to him.

The contemplated interview might prove helpful. With heightened hope, Simeon set out for "the hall."

He was swinging along one of the south corridors heading for an elevator to carry him to the cell rooms when he observed a slim, diffident and very much bewildered young lady approach a passing bluecoat with a murmured question.

The officer turned quickly at the sound of her voice and Simeon saw that it was Bill Riddell, off duty.

As Simeon passed Bill caught sight of him from the corner of his eye. "Just a minute, Mr. Dreer, if you don't mind," he called out, motioning toward the diminutive detective. Dreer bustled up.

"This young lady," said Riddell, admiration in his eye, "is Gabe Hatfield's daughter, direct from Sequatchie County, Tennessee. She wants to see her dad, but doesn't know how to go about it."

Simeon looked searchingly at the girl. She was beautiful, unreservedly beautiful, with the clear, fresh blown beauty of the open country.

"Good-morning," said Dreer. "So you are Arline Hatfield?"

The girl nodded. She seemed somewhat awed. Certainly she was strange and out of place. But despite this she maintained her remarkable poise.

"There's one thing I want to know," proceeded the detective. "Tell me, are you, too, engaged in this pseudo-religious-scientific work which animates your father?"

Arline Hatfield shook her head. "Not that I feel obliged to answer you," she replied in a voice with the Southern inflection, charming in itself, and fortunately devoid of her parent's broad accents, "but I do not believe you would take advantage of me. And, after all, it isn't of any consequence. No; I'm not engaged in his work. I hardly feel that I can believe in it. You see, I teach school down there in the mountains, and I've been so busy with the kiddies that I haven't had time to consider anything else. But I can understand the viewpoint of his followers, and I think they are entitled to their beliefs, don't you?"

"Well, yes, of course——"

"The thing I cannot understand is why daddy has been arrested. Surely, you—I—I—I——"

Tears were perilously close to the surface, and Simeon, fearing a storm, and not relishing it here in the public corridor, hastened to calm her. "Your father is held merely on suspicion," he explained. "Unfortunately, he lived very near to the scene of a big robbery, and circumstances were such that we were forced to regard him as the possible culprit. I am on my way to see him now, so if you wish to come along I shall be glad to arrange it."

"Oh, thank you." She started to put her hand on his arm in a frank gesture of appeal and hope, but thought better of it in time and lapsed into her former reserved attitude.

"Care to come along, young Riddell?" invited Dreer.

It was an unnecessary invitation. Bill, with his admiring eyes on the girl, was following blindly.

In his cell, Gabe Hatfield sat calmly reading one of his books on psychic phenomenon, which he had been permitted to carry with him. But at sight of Arline he leaped to his feet and smothered her in his long, rangy arms.

"Hain't a very nice place ter be a-visitin' yer old daddy, is it, little gal?" he whispered hoarsely when he found his voice.

She shook her head against his shoulder. "It isn't so—not a word of it, is it, daddy?" she choked.

"'Course not. I hain't no common crook." He dismissed the matter abruptly. "Tell me, Arline, gal, erbout the folks down thar in the mountings. They hevn't heard, hev they?"

"No. Sheriff Lederer came right to me, and I had him promise not to make it public—at least not until he has the whole story."

"An' air the folks comin' inter the Circle? Air they gettin' the truth erbout these great big mysteries o' life an' death?" He waved his free hand toward the book he had laid aside.

"Well, Joe Pavitt talks to them every Sunday—there in the front parlor—and a few new ones are always dropping in."

"I'm shore glad the Circle's widenin'. But we-all kain't never git nowhar without hit."

The detective advanced. "I'd like to talk with you, Hatfield," he said. "If your daughter will step into the corridor with young Riddell, I'll be through in a few moments."

Arline slowly released herself, cast a lingering look at her parent standing proud and straight against a background of gray stone, and passed through the cell door with Bill at her heels.

Dreer sat down thoughtfully on the cot, and his hand struck the psychic book. He opened it. "Chapter IX—Transmigration," he read. He skipped through it idly. Then he looked up at Hatfield. "Tell me," he commanded, speaking rapidly, "if you believe in transmigration?"

The mountaineer looked down at him. "Shore I do," he admitted.

"And do you believe that the transmigration of a soul is possible while the subject still lives?"

Gabe Hatfield's eyes took on a crafty glint. "What's thet ter you?"

Dreer ignored the counter question. "Just what is your conception of soul? You believe it to be the subconscious self, do you not? You believe that personality is not a product of the conscious mind, but merely the subconscious expressing itself, eh? Yet you think it possible for the two to co-operate to a certain extent—to the extent, say, of having your ethereal self accept suggestions from your conscious mind, and leave your body to carry them out. Am I right?"

Hatfield laughed outright. "You kain't make me commit myself," he replied. "Yo're a tol'able smart feller, but I ain't no dummy nuther. What's a-matter? Hev a leetle trouble agin, eh?"

Dreer's thoughtful attitude deepened. For a time neither spoke. Then Dreer changed the subject. "How long have you been in the city?" he asked.

"I ben hyeh six weeks."

"And your mission has been financially unsuccessful? That is to say, you haven't been able to interest wealthy people in your proposed church?"

"Tryin' ter trip me up agin, hain't yer? But I don't mind answerin' part o' yer question. Kain't do no harm nohow. Yep, hit's ben a tough job. Folks thet hev money mostly b'lieve in keepin' hit. Argyments hain't much use; or mebbe my tongue hain't smooth 'nough."

"But you're determined not to return to Tennessee without sufficient funds to carry on your work?"

"That I be. The Psychic Circle is a-goin' ter be the greatest and grandest religious body in this hyeh world o' ourn. Mark me. Why, man alive, hit's in the air. Hit's a direct wire from Gawd. And who be I ter consider me leetle likes and dislikes and squeemishnesses in the light o' sech revelation? Who be I ter object even ter——"

He stopped suddenly, as if struck by an idea, and lapsed into brooding silence. Simeon Dreer, though interested in this curious jumble of evangelistic formula and modern metaphysical theory, particularly as expressed in Hatfield's queer dialect, did not press him further. He had definitely settled an important question in his mind, anyway, and felt that whatever other information might be volunteered from this quarter would hardly prove of use. He arose, went to the door and beckoned Bill Riddell, who was standing at the end of the corridor talking with Arline.

"I'm through, young Riddell," he said, as they approached. "Give Miss Hatfield as much time as she wants with her father, and then escort her to a hotel. I'll tell them below that you're working with me on the stone-getter case."

Troubled and uneasy and petulant as a child, Simeon left the three in Hatfield's cell and descended to the street.

Proceeding absently on his way, Simeon suddenly felt something tighten about his foot and he fell sprawling on the sidewalk. Bitter rage welled up in him. Everything was going wrong. Everywhere he went he was being made a spectacle of. Glancing about he saw the cause of his present predicament; a length of telephone wire rolled from a huge coil at which some workmen, twenty feet away, were engaged.

The diminutive detective picked up the wire and thumbed it thoughtfully. His rage had vanished and had been supplanted by an intensive keenness. "A direct wire from God," he muttered. "A direct wire from God. Wires! Telephone wires! It's the only way any one could have learned—that night. By the shades of Poe, Gaborieau, and Doyle himself, it's worth looking into, at least. I'll do it. I'll do it this very afternoon."

He was still sitting there, legs outspread, and muttering to himself, yet utterly unconscious now of the ridiculousness of his position, when the workmen came over and helped him to his feet.

CHAPTER FIVE

LATE that afternoon a changed and utterly unrecognizable Simeon emerged from an alley behind Fifty-second street. He was clad in a greasy jumper, under which, apparently, judging from the bulk of him, he wore a sweater or two. A mechanic's black cap was pulled down over his smudged face. Pliers projected from his hip pocket. He carried a ladder and a roll of telephone wire.

At the corner he met Lieutenant Babcock, who was in plain clothes. They fell in step.

A boy went by shouting the night extras. Simeon suddenly awoke to action. "Here, boy," he cried, plunging a hand in his pocket.

The weazened little detective was an avoracious reader of newspapers. He got more than news from them. By the nature of the accounts and

the knowledge that his quarry read them, too, he was frequently able to anticipate otherwise unexpected moves.

No robberies were reported, but an article on the first page written by a famous woman journalist and interviewer featured for the first time the metaphysical aspect of the case. The writer had visited picturesque old Gabe Hatfield in his cell, and Gabe had talked nothing but Psychic Circle stuff, and the woman, ever in search of the sensational, had connected the dual life idea with thievery, and made a three-column feature of it which was being read with great avidity all over town, particularly by people interested in the occult. At the end of the article the woman journalist had tacked on the sentence: "Gabe Hatfield, however, denies having committed any wrong." This was left to be interpreted as one saw fit.

Simeon stuffed the paper in his pocket to keep company with the pliers, and whistling softly to himself, proceeded to a gaping subway entrance, where he paused and addressed the lieutenant. "Meet me here in an hour, Babcock," he said. "And bring Bill Riddell with you."

Just an hour later Simeon emerged from the same entrance, dressed in his conventional attire. Babcock and Riddell were there awaiting him. Lights were beginning to burn in store windows and early home-going workers flooded the street. The diminutive detective slipped through the crowds to Riddell's side. "All set, young Riddell?" he asked, softy.

The burly officer—now, like his companion, in plain clothes—looked down at him. "Sure I'm set," he replied. "Set for whatever happens. But what's on the boards? Why all the mystery?"

Ignoring his query, Simeon rubbed his hands with unconcealed anticipation, and turned to Babcock. "You understand now perfectly, eh? There will be no hitch?"

"Not on my part," the lieutenant assured him.

"Splendid," cried Dreer, in high spirits. "Then I'm off."

He left them and made his way directly to Leon Wattles' dusty, antiquated carpet store.

"Mr. Wattles," he said, as the merchant approached him through the dim gas light, "could you shut up shop a moment and come with me to the jewelry store of Stanley Brainerd? I suspect him of having engineered the robbery of his own store, and of a great many others as well. In short, I believe him to be the brains behind the diamond thefts which have mystified the city for months. Now, what I want you to do is identify the man I arrest. I want an acquaintance's word for it that he is actually Stanley A. Brainerd. If you would do this you would favor me greatly."

"Well, yes, of course I'll do it, but it seems to me you must be mistaken about Mr. Brainerd. I am quite sure, Mr.—er—officer, that he's not that sort. Why, I've known him for several years——"

"Often one's oldest acquaintances are those most easily deceived in such matters."

They walked to Brainerd's brilliant store, but Brainerd himself wasn't in. "He stepped out a moment to do a bit of shopping—collars and things, you know," said the clerk in charge. "He'll be back in a moment, though. Will you wait?"

Simeon nodded briefly.

Almost an hour passed, however, before the jeweler put in appearance. Entering, he eyed Dreer with surprise. "You're—you're——" he began.

"Yes, I'm Dreer, from headquarters," snapped the weazened little man. "I've come for you, Brainerd. You've had things your own way long enough. This time I have indisputable evidence that you are the stone-getter!"

The inexpressibly tall, lean, bald-headed jeweler fell back a pace as though struck, but checked himself quickly, straightened, and laughed heartily. "Please, please, Dreer," he chuckled, "don't kid me on such a delicate subject. You know I lost a trayful of stones myself only a week ago."

"Lost them, Brainerd?" said Simeon pointedly.

"Of course I lost them. You were here. You saw the fellow walk off with them."

"Yes, I saw him walk off with them, but I am not so naive as to believe that you would have stopped him if you could. See here, Brainerd, you may as well drop your bluffing, for I have the goods on you."

"You're wrong. You're wrong, I say. I know nothing about it."

"We'll talk that over at headquarters."

"Sh! Not so loud, please. There's no need of telling my clerks or the neighbors, is there? Can't we go somewhere, and—and——" His eyes fell on Leon Wattles and lighted up. "I don't know why you're here, Leon," he continued, "but—may we use your store for a few minutes? I've simply got to convince this man that he's wrong."

Though obviously embarrassed, Wattles replied hastily: "Yes, yes, of course. Come along. You're quite welcome, Brainerd."

"Well, all right; but you'll have to make it fast," said Dreer.

Silently the trio passed through the door to the street. Snow had commenced falling while they were indoors, and quite a wind had arisen. In a sense it reminded Simeon of that first night he tackled the stone-getter case, for without a doubt it was an incipient blizzard.

The street was even more crowded than before. Lights blazed in every window, throwing yellow radiance over the thin, white coating on the sidewalk. As they approached the antiquated tin awning that marked the Wattles' carpet shop, Simeon observed Bill Riddell loitering by the curb. At that moment Bill caught sight of Dreer, and immediately turned his back. The move was

pregnant with meaning to the diminutive detective.

Now something unexpected happened. Riddell hadn't turned quickly enough. For a moment he had been visible to the approaching trio. And the effect of his features on Leon Wattles was as surprising as it was unexpected. With a writhing motion he hurled himself through the crowds. Gaining in a few bounds the stairs to his apartments, he let himself in, bolted the door after him, and shot up the steps three at a time.

Then Simeon's conduct, too, became inconceivable. Without hesitation he left Brainerd to his own devices and followed pellmell at Wattles' heels. And to complete the confusion Bill and Brainerd came tumbing after.

Dreer put his foot through the glass, and with a huge and growing crowd watching awe-stricken from the sidewalk, flipped back the bolt. The three men went thundering up the stairs, and automatically the crowd closed in around the shattered door.

The little detective reached the bottom of the second flight just as Wattles put his foot on the top step. Hearing him, Wattles swung around. There was a large calibre revolver in his hand. He levelled it at Simeon.

No words were spoken, but the trio congregated on the second floot level knew that another step forward might be their last. They paused. The result was a striking tableau.

After a moment or two the man above began slowly backing away. Simeon edged up the stairway, getting his own gun out meanwhile. He was near the top now, and by dint of careful maneuvering managed to steal a glimpse along the hall without being observed.

He saw Leon Wattles, no longer mild-eyed, but dangerously frenzied, backed against the door of his room at the rear end of the hall just opposite the cubby-hole formerly occupied by Gabe Hatfield. His weapon was still pointed in the general direction of the stairway. He was struggling, with one hand behind him, to open the door; and once or twice his foot scraped over the worn matting to bring up with a thump against the panel.

Suddenly the door opened inward, and with an indescribable, animal-like yelp of rage, the carpet dealer, who was leaning too heavily against it, lost his balance and disappeared from view. Simeon heard sounds of struggle; heard Lieutenant Babcock's voice panting, "So we've got you at last, eh? We've got you at last!"

In a scant half-dozen bounds Dreer reached the doorway. He found Babcock seated on Leon Wattles' chest, menacing him with his own weapon. The captive was livid. His eyes were points of fire; his usually straggling mustache bristled like the hair on a bulldog's back. A string of passionate, unintelligible sounds issued through clenched teeth. To Simeon he resembled nothing so much as a raving maniac. Then, quickly and unexpectedly, the eyes softened, the bristling hair subsided, and the mild, almost apologetic face of the merchant revealed itself. Babcock relaxed, and started to his feet.

It was a ruse, of course. No sooner was the pressure relieved from his chest than Wattles gave a heave that sent his adversary crashing to the floor. Like an eel he slid under one side of the bed and out from the other, flashing in one great leap toward the window.

He crashed through pane and all in a sharp, perfectly arched dive. Dreer, who was right behind him, saw his form plunging straight down through a sea of snowflakes, and the little detective's heart came up in his throat sickeningly.

Then it was over. A dull, echoing thump; a dark, inert figure on a white ground; and—silence.

CHAPTER SIX

THEY were grouped in Dreer's uniquely cluttered study: Gabe Hatfield, fresh from his cell, and his charming daughter Arline, Bill Riddell, Lieutenant Babcock, Stanley Brainerd, and weazened little Simeon Dreer himself, who was slouched in a chair by the grate where blue and yellow gas flames licked at imitation logs.

Dreer was musing over a battered diary which he held in his hands. The rest sat around expectantly, waiting for him to speak.

Simeon stirred in his chair, and everybody came up to attention.

"Post-mortem explanations," remarked the little man, "are usually dull, dry, sordid things. But here's an exception. I think I can say without exaggeration that it is the most interesting explanation I have been called on to make throughout my entire career. Why? Principally because it deals with the functioning of an abnormal mind, which is revealed to us in all its important crises through this little book." He tapped the diary on his knee, and proceeded: "This man, Leon Wattles, was without doubt during his married life an exemplary character. The diary I have here was begun by his wife, only a few months before her death, and by it we are able to discern something of the extraordinary devotion he lavished upon her. Though quiet and undemonstrative, he was and apparently always had been possessed of a flaming love for the little woman he had taken to himself, and the passing years and his lack of success in business found it undiminished. Imagine the shock to him, therefore, when she passed away, leaving him utterly alone in a house which everywhere showed evidences of her handiwork. For some time he was stunned, and then the gradual perversion of his mental faculties began. It must have been about the time he set about renting rooms that he came over his wife's diary, and from then on it became a whim of his to write down the high lights of his career in this little red leather book to continue, as it were, in

a leering, diabolical mood, the notations she had started, taunting the unkind fate that had taken her from him with the human wreck which had resulted. I tell you, folks, it was a highly dramatic situation. Picture, if you can, a man who has been scrupulously honest all his life turning suddenly to crime. In a way, such a man has an immense advantage over the born crook. He is free of suspicion. He knows how honest minds work, and can anticipate them. Such was the situation in Wattles' case when his neuroses developed."

Simeon drew a long breath. The others remained in their former tense positions. The detective hitched one leg over the other and continued: "Leon Wattles had been a poor man all his life. He determined now—with an iron determination not possible in his normal state—to possess riches. As he indicates in his earliest written statements in the diary, the thought of what money would provide meant nothing to him. He had been deprived of it always, and had grown used to the little personal hardships common to most of us. That didn't matter, for then he had had love. Now even this had been taken from him, and the result was—the stone-getter! Out of an honest, docile personality emerges a daring, unbelievably clever criminal.

"As money of itself meant nothing to Wattles, he set diamonds as his standard of wealth. His first robbery proved so easy, and so entirely successful, that he settled down to a regular routine of depredations, adding regularly to his stolen horde until its value mounted high in the thousands, and the entire city shook with fear of him.

"He had been at it only a short time when our friend Gabe Hatfield came from the South with his plans for a new occult church. Naturally, Gabe hadn't much money to spend on accommodations, so he scanned the rooms-to-let column of the daily papers, selected Wattles' because it was cheapest, and presented himself at the carpet store. He was given one of the third floor back rooms.

"Now Hatfield occasionally discussed his theories of the subconscious with Wattles. Wattles wasn't very much interested, but he began to see in Gabe a means of diverting the police should the trail get too hot. The Southerner was alone; he was seeking money; he had strange ideas. An admirable suspect? Wattles tucked the idea away in a cranny of his diseased brain for use when needed.

"This period marked the beginning of public agitation about the stone-getter. Shortly thereafter, with the police searching eagerly for him, Wattles decided that it would be wise to keep posted on doings at headquarters. This was really easier than it sounds, for one of the telephone company's direct wires to the Hall passes through the alley back of Fifty-second street. He tapped this wire, carried a line to his bedroom, and procured a brace of receivers.

"Six or eight weeks later the carpet dealer mentions in his diary experiencing sudden and unreasoned fears. These spells resemble temporary recurrences to his former self, and at such times even the sight of brass buttons palsies him. It was while in the throes of one of them that he went to Mr. Brainerd, his neighbor, who is in the jewelry business, and voiced his suspicions of Gabe Hatfield. Later he told Hatfield of a wonderful tiara in Brainerd's window, the value of which would build a splendid church. Naturally Hatfield looked for it that afternoon while passing, and Brainerd's suspicions were aroused.

"It happened that Wattles was 'listening in' that evening when Brainerd telephoned headquarters, and the result was rather amazing. The fear-spell had, hours ago, dropped from him like a discarded garment; and now, in startling contrast, he conceived his most daring undertaking. It was to be a supreme, a lordly gesture—a snap of the fingers in the face of an unkind fate. He would hold up Brainerd himself in the Central Office man's presence! The detective was leaving immediately, and, being quite near Fifty-second street, would arrive perhaps half an hour before the bluecoats. Two men would be easy to handle. He would do it!

"And so the affair at Brainerd's transpired. The rest you can judge for yourself. The most confusing thing for me was this dual personality creed of Hatfield's. I discounted it entirely at first, but everywhere I turned it faced me, and finally when I was confronted that night in my bedroom by the white-masked stone-getter—or the apparition of him—I had to give in a little and admit that there might be things in heaven and hell undreamed of in my philosophy. And of course that was Wattles' reasoning, too. Well, from then on the situation began to clarify for me. The moment I got sufficiently rid of my prejudices to admit the possibility of subconscious crime, I was enabled to look at the subject coolly and dispassionately. I was enabled to put myself in Hatfield's place and imagine some of the difficulties which would confront him in projecting his subconscious self about the city in search of diamonds. That settled the matter for me. From then on I figured Hatfield out of it, and turned my attention to the other characters who have participated in this adventure. My stumbling over the telephone cables was the last stimulus necessary to put me on the right track. Disguised as a workman, I examined the wires passing through the alley back of Fifty-second street. While I worked at the rear of his store, Lieutenant Babcock, in plain clothes and posing as a customer, kept Wattles occupied at the front. There I made my big find—the tapped wire. Even this, however, was by no means conclusive evidence, so I returned to Brainerd's, got over the fence, and tapped on the back door. When he came I laid

out my little plan for luring Leon Wattles away from his shop long enough to have Lieutenant Babcock look into his personal possessions. This would have worked with complete smoothness had not the unbalanced carpet dealer caught sight of Bill's face, and recognizing him as an officer, divined the whole scheme and dashed in ahead of us. For Babcock, you see, had found the stone-getter's white mask, and many of the stolen diamonds, and had sent Riddell down to signal me that Wattles was my man.

"That, I think, explains all but one point. The remaining query—who or what was the apparition in my bedroom that night?—is answered by several brief quotations from the little red diary." Simeon raised the book close to his near-sighted eyes, and read aloud: "February fifteenth—It's getting hot, hot. They've taken their best detective off the murder squad and set him after me. I shall have to be more careful than ever. February seventeenth—I have made a spectacle of him. I have tied him up and robbed a man in his presence. They have arrested Hatfield for the job. I am unsuspected. Yet I am beginning to be afraid. That look in his eyes as he lay there watching me could mean only one thing: that he means to get me at all costs. February twentieth—Sometimes I tremble as if with the ague. I wonder why? It must be that damned detective. He means to get me. But he shan't. I'll kill him first. I will. I will. I'll do it to-night. February twenty-first—A failure! He awoke as I climbed the sill, and my nerve deserted me. I should have been captured had I not fled.'

"Perhaps it is better," concluded Dreer, "that he destroyed himself, for at best he would have spent the balance of his life in confinement." He laid down the book and arose.

The others, too, got to their feet. Little was said. A pall—something of the tragedy which had so recently been enacted—seemed to hang over them. The tall, lean, bald-headed jeweler and Lieutenant Babcock quietly said their adieus and departed. Bill Riddell and Arline, seated close together in a distant shadowy corner, conversed in low tones, apparently unaware of their exit.

Old Gabe Hatfield was obviously embarrassed.

"Tell me frankly, Gabe," requested the diminutive detective, "who was responsible for that wild newspaper story—that personal interview—about dual selves and subconscious crime? That story by the woman reporter, you know. You were, weren't you?"

Gabe laughed suddenly. "Shore I'll tell," he said. "'Tain't nothin' ter hide. Ye hinted so much erbout subconscious crime, up in thet thar cell, while Arline waited outside, thet the idea jest hit me smack 'tween the eyes. I thot ter meself, I thot, why not get some o' this yere publicity they talks erbout. Mebby thet would put the Circle on hits feet. And I kept thinkin' erbout hit, and the more I thot the better hit looked. The people, I told meself, deserves ter know erbout these yere pow'ful ideas thet dominates our movement, and I, ez their leader, hain't got no business holdin' back jest 'cause I'm squeamish erbout me dignity. So I tells Arline ter get one o' them yeller reporters, and I talks a hull lot erbout the subconscious, and the newspapers did the rest. Lots and lots o' folks, int'rested in the psychic, hev come ter me and told me they believes in me, and knows this yere talk erbout the robberies is all rot, and none o' them hev gone away 'thout leavin' a check fer the cause o' the great Circle. I tell ye, Mr. Dreer," and Gabe Hatfield's voice became intensely serious, "the time's comin'——"

"Yes, I know," replied Dreer, absently. His eyes, with just a hint of yearning in them, were on the distant, shadowy corner where Bill and Arline were now in each other's arms. He listened a while longer, then excused himself, and, going to the phonograph, started a flow of beautiful music which filled the superheated atmosphere and peopled it, for Simeon, with fanciful, romantic creatures as real to him as things of flesh and blood. No one—not even his intimates—had ever dreamed of this side of the weazened little detective's nature.

Dreer rejoined the queer old fellow from Tain'-see, and sat for several minutes with his eyes closed. The strains of Les Millions D'Arlequin billowed across the room, touching responsive chords, and stirring him as only music could stir him.

Hatfield touched him on the knee. "Prutty piece," he commented. "What d'ye call hit? What's hit's name?"

Dreer told him. "It means," he added, "'millions of fools.'"

Gabe chuckled and tossed his head in the general direction of the corner. "And ye think Arline and her man is amongst 'em, eh?"

Simeon Dreer contemplated the blue and yellow gas flames licking at imitation logs before replying. Then, as he arose to remove the record which was drawing to a close, he leaned toward Hatfield and whispered: "No. I think it is only such as I who belong in that class. I'd give all I possess to be as young as he, and in his shoes, right now."

HOW GUIANA INDIANS COUNT

THE Indians of Guiana have a curious system of enumeration, says the Columbus *Dispatch*. They count by the hand and its four fingers. Thus, when they reach five, instead of saying so, they call it a "hand." Six is therefore a "hand and first finger." Ten is "two hands." But twenty, instead of being "four hands," is a "man." Forty is "two men," and thus they go on by twenties. Forty-six is expressed as "two men, a hand and first finger."

A Mystery Of The Mail

By DAVID M. GASTON

DORA THOMPSON was a prattler—a natural gossiper, but she was a pretty, sprightly, intelligent creature, and was a general favorite in Stonehollow, where her father was postmaster.

Stonehollow is a large village up the river, in the neighborhood of which several wealthy New York merchants had summer residences, and the business of the post-office was quite brisk during the sunny season of the year.

Old Tom Thompson, the postmaster, was always laid up with rheumatism, and his wife and daughter performed the labors of his office.

That office was situated in the principal street of the village, with a country hotel for its next-door neighbor, and a barber-shop right across the way.

While sitting in the barber's chair one morning, I noticed Dora standing at her father's door, talking to a young man.

The barber was a young Swede, who possessed "the gift of silence" to such a remarkable degree that he was known as Silent Sam.

"Do you know that young fellow now talking to Miss Thompson?" I asked him.

"No," was the decided answer.

At the same moment a queer expression passed over the young barber's face.

It told me far more than a long speech could tell that the barber was in love with the pretty postmistress, and he was as jealous as fury.

"He's a stranger here?" I ventured to remark, as I watched Sam's face.

"I believe so," was the only answer I received by word of mouth, but the man's eyes said: "And I wish he'd quit this place."

Sam did not know that I was a detective, or that I was at that moment working up a mystery of the mail.

It occurred to me at the moment that I could make an ally of the jealous barber without his being aware of it, and that I could set him on to watch the post-office, so without pretending to notice his short remark, I continued:

"Miss Thompson is a very pretty girl. She must have many admirers."

"I suppose so."

The glare in the barber's eyes was growing fiercer and fiercer, yet his voice was as calm as ever. Then, as I noticed the expression on his face, I asked myself:

"Is it safe for me to provoke the jealous fellow, and he standing over me with a razor?"

The little mischief in my breast got the better of my caution, and I continued:

"That's a very good-looking fellow talking to her now. I wonder who he is?"

"I mind my own business," replied the barber, and his hand trembled so much that he cut my cheek.

That was enough for me.

Although the blood was streaming down my neck, the barber did not take the slightest notice of me, but he kept staring over at the pair on the other side of the street.

I sprang from the chair.

"You blamed fool," I cried, "if you were minding your own business you wouldn't be butchering me in that fashion!"

The fellow turned and stared at me a moment, as if undecided whether to finish by jabbing the razor, or striking me with his clinched hand.

"Served you right," he then gurgled.

I was about to let fly at him with my foot, when he dashed the razor on the floor, seized his hat, and ran out of the store, crying excitedly:

"Go to thunder!"

I sprang to the door and watched him, while I held a towel to my bleeding face.

Sam darted over to the other side of the street, and disappeared in the bar-room of the hotel. Dora Thompson and the young man had also disappeared.

"Come back here and finish your job, Sam," I yelled, as loud as I could.

The landlord of the hotel soon appeared at the door of his house, and there was a smile on his face, as he crossed over to me, saying:

"What did you say to Sam, sir? He's got one of them mad fits on him."

I told the man what had occurred and he burst out laughing, as he cried:

"I thought so. Sam won't shave any more to-day, you can bet."

"The mischief he won't? Then what am I to do, I'd like to know?"

"Here's his court plaster, and there's the razor. I'll fix the cut, and you must finish the shave as best you can. Sam is now good for a big spree. He'll be crazy by to-night."

"What's the matter with the fool, anyhow?"

"He's in love with Dora Thompson. He's getting worse and worse every day. He'll soon have to give up the shop altogether."

"I wish he had given it up before—confound him!" I cried, as I seized the razor, while the man put a piece of court-plaster on my cheek.

A moment later two pistol-shots were heard in the bar-room opposite.

"Thunder!" gasped the landlord, rushing out of the shop. "Sam is playing the mischief."

I darted out after him, forgetting the lather on my face.

Out from the bar-room dashed the young fellow who had been talking to Dora, and after him rushed the barber, a smoking revolver in his right hand.

"I'll fix you!" he shouted.

He then fired at his retreating rival; but the ball went wide of the mark.

Before he could fire again I had knocked the revolver from his hand, and I had the fellow's arms secured behind him.

He struggled, and kicked, and yelled like a madman, as I bore him to the ground, while the landlord assisted me in securing him. His rival had darted into the railway depot.

We dragged the barber into the bar-room, and then I saw that he had received a severe blow on the forehead.

"Served him right," cried the young man behind the bar. "He kicked up a row with a stranger, and struck him with a glass."

"Do you know that stranger?" I asked.

"I know him, sir," answered a soft voice behind me. "Mercy! Mr. Myers, how could you act so?"

The speaker was Dora Thompson.

Leaving the barber in the hands of his neighbors, I hastened into the wash-room and proceeded to set my face in order.

When I appeared in the bar-room again, the barber and Dora had disappeared.

After making a few inquiries, I treated those around me, and then strolled into the post-office, where I found Dora and her mother discussing the affray.

The old woman was seated at a table in the back room, while Dora stood at the counter assorting a lot of letters.

"I told you, Dora," said her mother, as I entered, "that it was wrong to encourage that barber."

"Law me, mother, I was only civil to him. Howdy-do, sir. Isn't it awful?"

"It came very near being a tragedy, young lady," I replied. "You said that you knew the young man who was fired at?"

"Yes, sir—that is, you know, he is an acquaintance."

"And a very short acquaintance," cried her mother, in shrill tones. "I hate strangers, Dora. They're no good, I tell you."

"Mother, Mr. Spencer is a real nice young man, I am sure, and he is so respectably connected. He ought to have Sam Myers arrested. Do you know Christopher Spencer, sir? He is from New York. They do say that Maud's engagement is broken off."

"There you go again, Dora," cried her mother. "You are always wanting to know what does not concern you in the least."

"Laws, mother, what's the harm? Don't all the village know that Maud Dean's engagement has been broken off? Don't you think that Mr. Spencer should have Sam Myers arrested, sir?"

"I should think so. May I ask you how long you have known Mr. Spencer?"

"Let me see. He came here first the day after Maud wore her new basque. Does she appear to grieve much over the broken engagement? They do say she was very much attached to Captain Decker. And isn't he splendid? It is a pity."

"Will you keep still, Dora," cried her mother, "and see what the gentleman wants?"

"Dear me, yes. She is so pettish, sir. Father always said that——"

"I was asking you, Miss Thompson, how long you were acquainted with Mr. Spencer."

"Let me see—yes. He came here first the day after the Fourth. They say he comes here too often, but people will talk, you know. No letter for you to-day, sir."

I didn't expect a letter, but I did wish to gain a little information, and I asked:

"Has Mr. Spencer many letters?"

"Well, yes—no—that is, a——. We never expose the secrets of the office, sir. Mother! here's another letter for Jane Miles."

"I do declare!" cried the old lady, clapping her hands in surprise. "From the same place?"

"From the same place and in the same handwriting, as I live."

"'Tain't none of my business, Dora, but no good will come of it, I'm certain. That's why I said you should not encourage the barber."

As I saw I was on the wrong track for gaining information, I left the post-office, fully convinced that the mother was as great a gossip as the daughter.

When I gained the street I saw Christopher Spencer walking toward me, and he was holding one hand in his breast, while the other was flourishing a cane. He entered the bar-room, and I went after him. Looking around, he asked the landlord:

"Where's that crazy barber now?"

"Up in bed, sick. Might as well let up on him, sir."

"I'll blow his brains out if he ever runs foul of me again. He'd be a dead man now if I'd had my automatic with me."

As I knew the man, I was inclined to be of the same opinion. Chris Spencer—as he then called himself—was about as ugly a customer as one could meet in a night's walk in a crowded city.

I was after him then, but he was not aware of the fact, as he was not personally acquainted with me. The man was a crook and was engaged in a desperate plot at the time.

I saw the barber in his bed that evening, and had a long talk with him.

He assured me that Dora loved him dearly until Chris Spencer appeared on the scene, and that she had promised to be his wife.

Sam Myers informed me that his father was well off in Sweden, and that he was an only son. While we were still talking Dora was ushered

into the room. I could soon see that the frivolous girl really liked the barber, but that she was somewhat spoiled by the attentions of the man from the city. I left Sam to escape her tiresome chatter.

The barber was at his shop on the following morning, and so was I. It took him a long time to complete the shave commenced on the previous day, and I was not impatient.

By altering the position of the mirror on the wall, I was enabled to observe the movements of those in the post-office directly behind me across the street.

Chris Spencer strolled along presently and entered the post-office.

I was watching him closely in the mirror, and I had an eye on Dora and her mother at the same time.

Dora was standing with her back to the counter when Chris entered, and it seemed as if a splendid game of prattle was going on, for the old woman's jaws were working away at a 2.40 gait.

Spencer advanced to the counter with stealthy steps, and glanced over the pile of letters lying there. Seizing one of them, he thrust it into his breast, then straightened himself up, coughed aloud, and saluted Dora and her mother.

When the mail-thief left the post-office I was on his track, disguised as a regular old tramp.

The friend I was stopping with on the hill above was an old retired sea-captain named Richard Dean, and he had an only daughter, whose name was Maud.

About a month previous Captain Dean paid a visit at the office in New York, and asked me to assist him in a mysterious affair. His daughter, who was a beautiful, intelligent girl of eighteen, was engaged to a young man who was captain of a North River steamboat. His name was John Decker.

The young captain paid Dora a visit at Stonehollow on the Fourth of July, and attended a private picnic with her on the following day. Dora Thompson and her mother were at that picnic, and they became acquainted with the young captain there.

Chris Spencer was also at the picnic, and it was noticed that he paid particular court to Maud Dean, while he flirted with Dora Thompson as well.

Young Captain Decker was very much annoyed at his sweetheart for receiving the stranger's attentions and a quarrel ensued. It would have been but a lover's quarrel at most, were it not for the prattling of Mrs. Thompson and her daughter, who reported around the village that Maud had been jilted by her lover. After that Spencer became a constant visitor at the post-office, and Myers looked on him as a rival.

He continued to visit Maud Dean as well, and the young lady's father, who was a very wealthy man, called on me to make inquiries about the fellow. Captain Dean said to me:

"What surprises me most is that young Decker hasn't since written to my daughter. He's a sensible young man, and I didn't dream that he'd be the one to break off an engagement on account of a silly quarrel."

"What do you wish me to do?" I asked.

"I want you to pay me a visit and see this Spencer. It will be as well also to make some inquiries about him here in town. Here is his picture and his city address."

I started a little when I looked at the photograph, as it bore a very close resemblance to a person whom we had been instructed to look for, a noted and desperate Chicago confidence man.

When the old captain left I compared the likenesses, as I had one of the Chicago rascal in my possession.

Having satisfied myself as to that point, I started out to make inquiries about Chris Spencer, who was known as a young man of fortune, and who generally lived in bachelor apartments uptown. I soon learned that he had started on an extended trip to the great West on the evening of the third of July; that he was a very peculiar, secretive, eccentric young man; and that he had no confidential friends.

I further learned that Spencer had a brother who was sent to Sing Sing prison for five years when he was only nineteen.

Pursuing my inquiries further, I made the acquaintance of young Captain Decker; and from him I learned that Spencer was a passenger on his boat on the evening of the third of July, and that he left the boat at Catskill in company with a dark-whiskered man whom he met on board.

Assuring Captain Decker that I was the old captain's friend, the young man informed me that he had written to Maud Dean several times, and that he had not received an answer, on account of which neglect he was highly indignant.

I requested him to write again, and post the letter so that it would be received at Stonehollow at a certain hour. When I paid a visit to Captain Dean's house, I managed to keep out of the way when Spencer called there after he stole the letter in the postoffice.

I was now following the gentleman to a little grove outside the village, and he had Captain Decker's letter to Maud Dean in his breast-pocket.

When he entered the grove I kept along the road until I reached the other end of the little wood, when I stole back. Moving along as quietly as possible, I soon caught sight of my man, who was seated on the trunk of a tree, holding the open letter in his hand, and smoking as if he were at peace with all the world.

He would take the cigar from his mouth every now and then, and mutter something aloud, in a manner that told of his intense satisfaction at the progress of his scheme. I drew closer and

closer, until I could hear every word he muttered. "Everything works delightfully," he said to himself, "thanks to the gabby postmistress. It was a bright idea of mine to intercept the letters, or they would make up again. Now she will be my wife, and we will be off to Europe together. When we come back here, no one—— Hallo, you infernal rascal, what were you sneaking around here for?"

The last words were addressed to me as I had just stepped on a rotten branch and stumbled forward. Before I could regain my feet the man seized me by the collar with one hand and had a revolver pointed at my head.

I saw that the best of my play was to keep up my assumed character, for there was murder in the man's eyes as he glared down at me.

"I wasn't doing nothing wrong, mister," I replied in trembling tones. "I'm only a poor guy looking for a place to take a quiet snooze."

"You can't fool me that way—you've been dogging me, I know. Was it the barber put you up to it? Come—confess, or I'll blow your brains out."

The man had thrust the stolen letter into his breast-pocket. I hesitated to answer, as I was meditating how to act under the circumstances, and I kept glaring up at him.

"Speak out, you old rip, or I'll fire," he cried again.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the revolver went off, the ball striking me slantingly on the temple and stunning me.

When I opened my eyes I was alone in the grove where I had fallen.

On searching my pockets I found my gat and other things all safe. Then I felt convinced that the shooting had been accidental; and that the man had hastened away from the grove under the impression that he had killed me.

Taking a roundabout way I got to the barber's shop again, where I resumed my decent appearance, and then went over to the post-office.

Dora and her mother were prattling away as usual, and the subject was Maud Dean.

I received a letter written by Captain Decker.

That night Captain Dean received some visitors on the quiet at his house on the hill, and Spencer was among them.

He was in the parlor with Maud when I was introduced by the old captain.

There was not the least appearance of reproach of conscience on his handsome face, as I remarked to Captain Dean:

"I suppose you heard about the murder in the grove, captain?"

"What murder?" asked Maud in alarm.

"An old tramp was found dead in the grove this evening with a bullet in his head," I replied, as I kept a side eye on my man.

"I suppose one of his companions killed him," remarked Spencer. "There won't be much fuss made about a fellow like that."

"You are mistaken," I said. "There's quite a fuss over it; and they are after the murderer now. The barber says he knows the murderer."

"The barber! What—the crazy fellow who tried to shoot me?"

"The very same man, Mr. Spencer. He is here now, and he accuses you of the murder."

"Accuses me! The fellow is as crazy as a—a—what nonsense! Captain Dean, you should have put that fellow in the asylum, as I said."

"Crazy or not crazy," replied the old captain, "he accuses you of murder, and robbing the mail as well."

"Robbing the mail!"

"Yes, robbing the mail. You have been stealing my daughter's letters from the post-office—and there's one of them now in your breast-pocket, you——"

Before the old captain could finish the sentence the culprit made a dash for the open window.

I was out after him, and caught him by the coat.

Wheeling round, he struck me on the face with the barrel of his revolver and knocked me back in the room. He then dashed out of the window.

I sprang up again just as two pistol shots were heard outside.

"'I shot him—I shot him!" yelled the barber. "My pistol was loaded this time. I got it in the leg, but I don't mind that."

When we got on the lawn we found Spencer lying on the path and the barber and Captain Decker were standing over him.

Before he died that night he made a full confession.

His real name was Thomas Spencer, and he was the fugitive from Chicago all right.

Being incensed against his brother because the latter inherited all his father's property, he plotted to take his place in the world.

As there was a strong family resemblance, he hoped to baffle detection after spending some years traveling.

He trapped his brother in one of the defiles of the Catskill mountains, shaved off his own full beard, and assumed the clothes of the young man whom he incarcerated in an asylum.

Having chanced to meet Maud Dean at the landing on the Fourth of July, he became smitten with her and resolved to take her abroad as his wife.

Then he set about intercepting all correspondence between the girl and her lover, hoping thus to gain his point.

Maud did not care for the man, and she was only too happy at the reconciliation with Captain Decker, whom she soon married.

Dora's father was removed from his position as postmaster, and the family removed to New York City. The crazy barber followed them, and continued to make love to Dora, who soon became his wife.

Spencer's brother died in the asylum.

Current News

MACHINE FOR RAISED EMBROIDERY.

The United States Consul at Lyons reports the invention of a machine at that place for the making of raised embroidery in gold and silver. It is stated that the stitch is a copy of an ancient form of embroidery and gives an impression of handwork, and is also the first machine that has been successful in using the metallic thread. Various machines have been employed in the making of raised embroidery in other threads. It is stated that the machine is the result of seven years of study, and that the results are very satisfactory.

BACHELOR SEA LIONS TO DIE.

Because 100 bachelor sea lions on Anno Nuevo Island, twenty miles north of Santa Cruz, Cal., clutter up the walks around the lighthouse, steal food from the back porch of the lighthouse keeper's cottage and have a sneaking desire to take up their residence in the front parlor, the United States Lighthouse Service will open bids for shooting the obnoxious bachelors.

There are four hundred more sea lions on the island, but as they consist of thoroughly trained husbands with their harems of wives, they have their own social sets and don't bother the lighthouse keeper, said Rhodes. The bachelors' skins are good for leather, their blubber contains good oil and the rest of their carcasses can be sold for fertilizer, he stated.

WHY CAT'S EYES GLOW.

Not satisfied with the old explanation that cat's eyes glow in the dark because they catch and concentrate every little glimmer of light that may be about, scientific men have been making experiments recently to see if there may not be some other explanation for the eye's glow when there is no light at all. This is true of the eyes of many animals; in fact, is true of most nocturnal creatures, including birds and insects. The first man to point to what seems to be the true reason was Professor Bugnion of Switzerland, who suggested that perhaps invisible rays—such as ultra-violet and infrared—were transformed by some chemical action into visible rays at the instant of reflection from the eyes.

SLIGHT ELECTRIC SHOCK MAY PROVE FATAL.

It is astonishing how slight an electric shock may cause death. Dana Pierce, vice-president of the American Society of Safety Engineers, states that "there are some well authenticated cases of fatal shock from a voltage of 110, the usual lamp circuit voltage. The danger is believed to be small to persons in fair physical condition unless the contact made with the circuit is extremely good and is long continued.

"A voltage of 220 is, of course, more dangerous. At 440 volts and over the hazard becomes very real, and anything over 600 or 1,000 volts must be treated with respect and constant caution. It is not possible to say where real danger begins, nor is it necessary, at least over 150 volts."

THE DISCOVERY OF THE PHILIPPINES.

The first white man to set foot on the Philippine Islands was Magellan, who landed at Jemonjol, now Malhou, an islet in the strait between Samar and Dinagrat, 398 years ago. Afterward he discovered other islands of the group, which he called the St. Lazarus Islands. He was killed by the natives of the Island of Mactau on April 27 of the same year. Both the Spanish and the Portuguese claimed the islands, the former calling them the Isles de Poniente, and the latter bestowing the name of Islas de Oriente upon their discovery. Spain eventually made good her claim and held the islands until they were sold to the United States in 1899 for $20,000,000. For a brief period between 1762 and 1764, the city of Manila was held by the English, but they surrendered it to Spain u[illegible]payment of a ransom of $5,000,000.

UNCLE SAM PAYS HIS DEBT TO THE INDIANS.

The exact sum paid to members of the Osage tribe is $3,397,197.11. That includes the interest of 5 per cent. on the Osages trust fund. Each of the 2,229 Osages on the tribal roll receives in addition to his $1,500 check the sum of $47.50 as interest on the money in the trust fund.

Simultaneously nearly $500,000 is being turned back into the National Treasury by members of the tribe who are filing their income tax reports. The checks average about $165 for each name on the rolls.

All Osages who possess certificates of competency are being paid the full amount of their payment. Those without certificates of competency are given $1,000, the balance remaining in trust for them. Minors received $500 a quarter. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will be paid on old debts out of accumulated funds. Of the $3,397,197.11 in this payment probably one-half is withheld for minors and restricted Indians. Other large portions are sent to allottees residing outside of the county, notably in Kansas, Texas and California.

GEORGIA PROPOSES TAX ON BACHELORS PAST THIRTY.

It's going to cost $5 a year to remain single in Georgia. That is, to be more exact, it's going to cost bachelors past 30 years old $5 a year for the privilege of remaining that way.

Get married and save the $5 is the only way out, under an amendment to the tax act voted recently by the Georgia House of Representatives. The measure has to be voted on by the Senate, but owing to the low tax rate it is generally conceded it will pass unless some heckling Senator, probably a bachelor, makes hash of the measure by convincing his hearers that in celibacy only is found the "Perfect State."

One phase of the measure is of interest. It prescribes that the person taxed must be perfectly sane. Insanity is a perfectly proper excuse for remaining a bachelor past 30 years, and the lack of a wife is not punishable by taxation.

But this measure is a tame one to another amendment along the same line—it didn't pass—which provided: $100 a year tax on all unmarried men and women over 30; $200 a year on grass widows and widowers; $500 on pairs married three years who have no children.

NEW MACHINE GUN PENETRATES

The United States Army has developed a .50 calibre machine gun capable of firing a bullet which, at 200 yards, will penetrate the one-inch armor plate of battle tanks, Major Lee O. Wright, army ordnance department, announced May 28, at the annual convention of the ordnance section of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers at Rock Island Arsenal.

The new weapon is an outgrowth of the war, he said, when fighting tanks were armored to resist the .30 calibre bullet of the rifles and machine guns then in use.

The .50 calibre machine gun fires a bullet weighing 800 grains, as compared to the 150 grains of the standard .30 calibre ammunition.

The gun is modeled along the plan of the Browning machine gun developed during the war and weighs sixty-five pounds. The gun has a muzzle velocity of 2,500 feet a second, and an effective range of from 6,000 to 7,000 yards.

In testing the new gun and ammunition the ordnance department has built a rifle range at the Aberdeen, Md., proving grounds, consisting of a pool of water 1,000 yards long and a narrow gauge railroad track running back 7,000 yards.

America's supply of walnut for gun stocks has been so nearly exhausted, Major Wright said, that the Ordnance Department is now experimenting with stocks built up from thin layers of walnut cemented together.

MENTAL MENUS

On a recent very hot day a famous doctor lunched at our club. I was at the table and watched him scan the menu,' says a writer in the London Mail. I wondered what he would choose to eat in a tropical noon. I knew him for an authority on diet. He ordered very simply. Thus:

Two portions of melon.
Cold salmon with an ample mixed green salad.
Fresh cherries.

With this he drank barley-water with lemon and ice.

"Medical science," he said to me, "is interested just now in the psychic effect of different foods. You know that some patients are not physically in need of medicines, only psychologically. Most doctors have occasions when they mix a bottle of harmless and innocent medicine for the sole reason that the invalid would never think he was getting treatment if he did not receive a bottle inscribed: "One tablespoonful three times a day after meals. And there is a sense in which thought either heals or aggravates the disease.

"That is by the way. But the psychic effect of food is also real. It is proverbial that good feeling and good-fellowship aid digestion. They are a mental wine of value for 'the stomach's sake.' 'Sorrow spoils the chef' might well become another proverb.

"I will go farther. Certain foods have power to excite by their very names and associations and interest an attitude of mind that tend to give the effect desired. Let me illustrate by my choice from the menu this equatorial day.

"Melon suggests coolness. The suggestion helps the cooling physical juices in the body itself to come into play at a time when the whole system is parched by the heat.

"The same is true of cold salmon, with the fresh green salad added. There's more than that in my choice. I know few words so potent as 'vinegar' in promoting a sense of pleasant coolness. It stirs a psychic breeze. It suggests the easing of pain and the healing of wounds. With my salad I get the cooling thought of vinegar, you see.

"I need not expound the other items in my menu. Mind and body went together in choosing it. I think that from both points of view it approaches a model of a light midday meal when King Sol is on his blazing throne.

"But winter or summer, it is thought that tells, or, rather, the effect on thought, when one is ordering a meal. And dainty serving, pleasant environs, tell upon digestion. We British will never get the utmost out of our food until we learn not only to cook it but also to serve it.

"The other day I was on a train journey. I took lunch in the restaurant car. Practically the same menu as in the middle of December—hot soup, hot roast—everything hot. Imagine the effect of the words 'hot soup' upon the temper of a man or woman in this torrid zone of weather! I can foresee a new servant on the staffs of your clubs. He may be callled the chef-psychologist. He will give us Thought Cooking! Thought waves and heat waves have kinship."

STARS INHABITATED? ALL GUESSWORK!

In a letter to Science, Prof. George C. Comstock takes up the question of the possibility of other worlds than ours being inhabited, and quotes some of the things the late Prof. Newcomb said upon the subject, as follows:

"The spirit of modern science is wholly averse to speculation on questions for the solution of which no scientific evidence is attainable, and the common answer of astronomers to all questions respecting life in other worlds would be they knew no more on the subject than any one else and having no data to reason from, had not even an opinion to express."

Again:

"It is perfectly reasonable to suppose that beings not only animated but endowed with reason inhabit countless worlds in space."

And finally:

"Here we may give free rein to our imagination with the moral certainty that science will supply nothing tending either to prove or to disprove any of its fancies."

On all of which Prof. Comstock comments: "In this connnection one is reminded of a famous apothegm 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' "

PROFESSIONAL BEGGAR CALLED BORN GAMBLER.

"The professional beggar is a born gambler," Richard A. Billings, manager of the Helping Hand Institute, Kansas City, said. "If one man turns him down there is always hope that somebody else will come across. Some of them make $8 and $10 a day.

"The beggar lurks about dark corners and sizes up those who pass by. He has them classified, and even after he encounters a man he is quick to recognize whether he has picked out the right person.

"His story is adapted to the listener. If he talks with one who seems to be a married man his story has to do with a sick child or separation from his family. He watches his prospect and when he sees the eye glisten he presses his climax to a lamentable end.

"If he is talking to a young man the tale is different. There is the story of the unjust employer or inability to work under wretched conditions. In this way he gets money from a man who has less income than himself. If he is talking to a 'sport' he may even ask for money to buy whisky.

"Sometimes these beggars get dimes, sometimes dollars and sometimes $5 bills. There is as much uncertainty to it as a game of chance.

"These people are able to prey on the public because it is not generally known that every man can get free lodging and food here for the asking. The Helping Hand does not turn men away when they come asking for help. But the organization requires that a man who is able-bodied must work if he eats. We give them a bed and a meal, but before they get another meal they must do some work. Many men who come to the Helping Hand expect to be supported in idleness. When told they must work they prefer to work on the streets.

"The Provident Association does for families what the Helping Hand does for single men. I have been to many of our largest cities and have never found a system of charity that compares with that of Kansas City."

VOLCANO ROUTED ARMY.

Footprints 130 years old of a Hawaiian army that fled from the wrath of Pele, goddess of the active volcano of Kilauea, near here, are believed to have been discovered in the Kua desert, Hilo, Island of Hawaii, south of the great crater, by Professor T. A. Jagger, Jr., in charge of the volcano observatory.

Dr. Jagger and his party were exploring a region far removed from any of the known modern trails when they came upon an area thickly covered with the imprint of naked feet, all pointing in the one direction, all deep at the toes and light at the heels, indicating that the makers of the tracks had been running at top speed.

The tracks originally had been made in volcanic ash, which is strongly impregnated with sulphurous acid and gypsum and which, when wet by rain, settles into a hard concrete, thus explaining the preservation of the imprints for a period believed to have stretched over more than a century and a quarter.

Hawaiian legend and history provide the other side of the story, the connnection between the Kau desert tracks and the flight of the army of Keoua, King of Kau, from Pele's wrath.

Keoua led an army of three divisions against King Kamchameha, who later united all the Hawaiian islands under his sway, in the year 1790. This year also recorded the last explosive eruption of Kileuea volcano. Hawaiian legend records the fact that some of Keoua's warriors rolled stones into Kilauea crater to mark their disrespect for the goddess of the molten lake. Whatever the reason for the outburst, Pele rose in her wrath, and, with a terrific explosive eruption, totally wiped out the second division of Keoua's army.

The footprints found in the Kau desert are believed to be those of men of the first division, who, seeing the destruction of their comrades in the rear, fled from the locality. The third division coming up saw the bodies of the annihilated second and halted.

The area where the footprints were discovered is part of the new Kilauea National Park, which will be dedicated this year, and steps already have been taken to inclose the tracks and preserve them.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. Here are the latest numbers:

NO.

41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Charles F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by Beulah Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William Hamilton Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by Caroline Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue in the Dark Room," by Hamilton Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by Ethel Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thos. J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Andreen.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. F. Oursler.
77 "The Little White Room," by Marc Edmund Jones.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by William Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "A Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Marc Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89 "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Police Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. F. Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.

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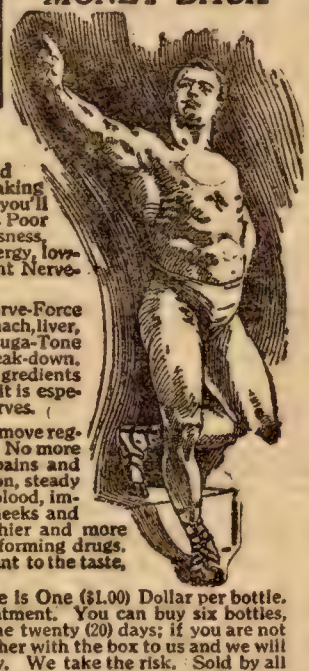

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A ROCKING STONE FROM BUENOS AIRES.

Those who are familiar with the sights of Bronx Park, New York, know what a rocking stone is. For others, it may be explained that the term refers to a boulder of decent size that has been deposited, usually by glacial action, on the surface of rocky ground in such a way as to sway back and forth under the application of pressure from the wind or from a human hand, without toppling completely over. The phenomenon must obviously be a rare one, since the stone must possess sufficiently stable equilibrium to prevent it from keeling over entirely, yet be unstable enough to make motion possible. And now we learn of a rock down in the southern hemisphere, near Buenos Aires. In at least one respect this is more extraordinary than the New York stone, for the latter presents an entirely solid picture to the eye, and one would never suppose that it would rock until one had tried it; but the Argentine boulder looks as though the least touch would topple it over into the valley below. The rocking stone is no small stone with regard to size, either; it is 24 feet high and 18 feet long, weighs 300 tons

MILES OF RED TAPE.

A group of college students climbed to the top of the Washington Monument. The elevator was out of commission. A senior arriving at the top, exhausted, fell against one of the windows, 555 feet up, and his hat rocketed down the elevator shaft.

The hatless college lad sought the aid of a guard, who sent him back down the thousands of steps to the monument office, where he obtained an order for the opening of the lower elevator door. Armed with his pass the youth rushed back. Then he was curtly told that he must have the counter signature of another attendant. And this attendant at the moment was at the top of the shaft. Breathless the boy to establish his identity had to climb the thousands of steps again all the way to the top of the shaft, and after getting the signature turned around and descended the shaft.

The lad got his hat. He also got inside information on Government red tape. Officials, learning of the incident, felt that Gen. Hell and Maria Dawes, in the course of Government housecleaning, may hurl his spectacular form against some of these specimens of needless rules.

"END YOUR RHEUMATISM

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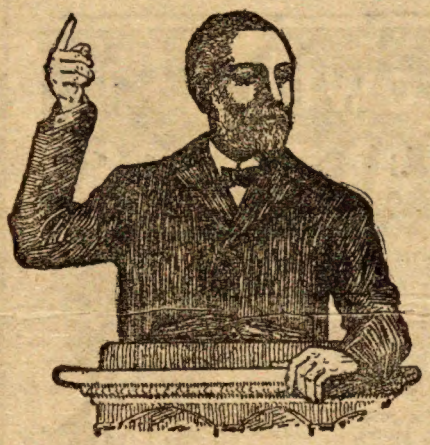

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Emphatically asserting that thousands of unfortunate sufferers have been led into taking wrong treatments under the old and false belief that "Uric Acid" causes rheumatism, Pastor H. W. Reed says:

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"I had suffered agony for years from rheumatism and associated disorders, and Mrs. Reed was tortured with the demon neuritis almost beyond endurance. We had read and talked so much about 'Uric Acid' that our minds seemed poisoned. But the 'Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism' made it all clear to us and now we are both free from the suffering and misery we endured so many years. I believe I was the hardest man in the world to convert! For me to discard the old 'Uric Acid' theory, and what I now know to be absolutely false, for the new, scientific understanding of the causes and cure of rheumatism, was like asking me to change my religious beliefs! But I did change, and it was a fortunate day for me and mine when I did so."

NOTE: "The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism" referred to above by Pastor Reed lays bare facts about rheumatism and its associated disorders overlooked by doctors and scientists for centuries past. It is a work that should be in the hands of every man or woman who has the slightest symptoms of rheumatism, neuritis, lumbago or gout. Any one who sends name and address to H. P. Clearwater, 534 F Street, Hallowell, Maine, will receive it by mail, postage paid absolutely free. Send now, lest you forget the address! If not a sufferer, cut out explanation and hand it to some afflicted friend.

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Do You Want It?

Ford Autos GIVEN AWAY

SOLVE this puzzle, win Ford Auto votes free. The letters of the alphabet are numbered: A is 1, B is 2, and so on. The figures in the little squares to the left represent four words. (20 is the letter "T".) What are the four words? Can you work it out? If so, send your answer quick. Surely you want this fine, new Ford auto. Send no money with solution. I have already given away many autos.

SEND ANSWER TO-DAY

We not only give away this Ford auto, but hundreds of dollars in cash and scores of other valuable prizes. Bicycles, Guns, Watches, Talking Machines, something for everybody. Everyone who answers this can have a prize. There are no losers. Nothing difficult to do. Everybody wins. Someone gets this new, latest model Ford Auto free. Why not you? Write today and be first.

AUTO STEVENS, 141 W. Ohio Street, Dept. 2464 Chicago, Ill.

New Hair Growth After BALDNESS

On legal affidavit, John Hart Brittain, business man, certified to this: "My head at the top and back was absolutely bald. The scalp was shiny. An expert said that he thought the hair roots were extinct, and there was no hope of my ever having a new hair growth.

"Yet now, at an age over 66, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness. The pictures shown here are from my photographs." Mr. Brittain certified further:

After hair growth

INDIAN'S SECRET OF HAIR GROWTH

Photo when bald.

"At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian 'medicine man' who had an elixir that he asseverated would grow my hair. Although I had but little faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a healthy growth, and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was astonished and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly.

Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade.

I negotiated for and came into possession of the principle for preparing this mysterious elixir, now called Kotalko, and later had the recipe put into practical form by a chemist.

That my own hair growth was permanent has been amply proved."

How YOU May Grow YOUR Hair

It has been proved in very many cases that hair roots did not die even when the hair fell out through dandruff, fever, *alopecia areata* or certain other hair or scalp disorders. Miss A. D. Otto reports: "About 8 years ago my hair began to fall out until my scalp in spots was almost entirely bald. I used everything that was recommended but was always disappointed until at last I came across Kotalko. My bald spots are being covered now; the growth is already about three inches." G. W. Mitchell reports: "I had spots completely bald, over which hair is now growing since I used Kotalko." Mrs. Matilda Maxwell reports: "The whole front of my head was as bald as the palm of my hand for about 15 years. Since using Kotalko, hair is growing all over the place that was bald." Many more splendid, convincing reports from satisfied users.

KOTALKO
FOR FALLING HAIR
BALDNESS, DANDRUFF
For Sale at all Busy Drug Stores

Kotalko is wonderful for women's hair.

KOTALKO contains GENUINE BEAR OIL and other potent ingredients. No alcohol, no shampoo; but a hair elixir of wonderful efficacy. All ingredients are safe and harmless, even for a child's scalp and hair. Positively KOTALKO is one delightfully reliable hair preparation that succeeds upon genuine merit. Buy a box of KOTALKO at the drug store. Or ask for Kotalko at the toilet goods or drug counter of any large department store. Remember the name. Accept nothing else as "just as good." $300.00 GUARANTEE. Or if you send 10 cents (silver or stamps), you will receive a PROOF BOX of Kotalko with BROCHURE, postpaid. Determine NOW to eliminate DANDRUFF, to treat BALDNESS, to STOP HAIR FROM FALLING. Get a box of guaranteed KOTALKO, apply once or twice daily; watch in your mirror. For PROOF BOX (10 cents, none otherwise) write to

KOTALKO OFFICES, BA-374, Station X, New York

ALL ENGAGED GETTING ELDERBEERY BLOSSOMS.

It is elderberry blossom time throughout the Middle West. Farmers and scores of automobilists from the cities can be seen daily scouring the whole countryside gathering their yearly supply of blossoms for a beverage which they claim to be a little more than one-half of 1 per cent. It is the real elderberry blossom wine, more popularly known as "elderberry blo." One quart of the blossoms will make approximately one gallon of wine, the farmers say. And they predict a "wet year" from the bumper crop of blossoms.

The farmers have, so far as known, four ways of allaying the thirst caused by the well-known amendment: During the early part of the spring they make a beverage from maple sap which they call "sugar-water beer," but which is far from being water; late spring is the time for gathering dandelion blossoms for "dandy wine;" at the present date they are looking to the future for the success of their elderberry brewing, and during the fall months they gather crab apples for cider.

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